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ANNEX



ANNEX



A
COLLECTION
OF
ESSAYS AND TRACTS
IN
THEOLOGY,

FROM VARIOUS AUTHORS,

WITH
BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL NOTICES.

BY JARED SPARKS.

VOL. IV.



BOSTON,

PUBLISHED BY OLIVER EVERETT, 13 CORNHILL

1824.

ROY WEN
JUN
VIA

Press of the North American Review.

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SELECTION

FROM

WILLIAM PENN'S

WORKS.



WILLIAM PENN.

WILLIAM PENN was born in London, Tower Hill, on the 14th of October, 1644. He was descended from an ancient and highly respectable family, and was the only son of Admiral Sir William Penn, who held at different times many important stations, and rendered valuable public services to the government. The son was early put to school at Chigwell, in Essex, where he was instructed in the elements of learning. According to his biographers, he received while at this school the impressions, which marked the strong peculiarities of his future life.

Anthony Wood relates, that when he was eleven years old, being in his room at Chigwell, "he was so suddenly surprised with an inward comfort, and, as he thought, an external glory in the room, that he has many times said, that from that time he had the seal of divinity and immortality, that there was also a God, and that the soul of man was capable of enjoying his divine communications."* And William Penn himself after-

* *Athenae Oxonienses*, Vol. II. col. 1050.

wards stated, in the account of his travels on the continent, "that the Lord first appeared to him about his twelfth year," and that, during the three years following, "the Lord visited him, and gave him divine impressions of himself."* Whatever part the imagination may have had in creating and fixing these impressions, it cannot be doubted that they exercised a strong influence in deciding the bent of his mind and character.

From Chigwell he went at the age of twelve years to a private school on Tower Hill, where, with the aid of a tutor in his father's house, he was prepared for the University. At the age of fifteen he was entered at Christ's Church, Oxford, as a gentleman commoner. Among his companions and intimate friends at the University was the celebrated John Locke, for whom he ever afterwards cherished a warm attachment. In the first part of his collegiate course Penn was distinguished for his attainments and devotedness to study, as well as for the spirit and vivacity with which he entered into the amusements and exercises suited to his age. But an incident soon happened, which revived the impressions of Chigwell school, involved him in immediate difficulty, and laid the foundation of his future conspicuous career in the character of a powerful, zealous, and unwearied champion of a peculiar religious faith. A man by the name of Thomas Loe came to Oxford, and preached the doctrines of the Quakers. The mind of William

* *Biographia Brit.* Vol. V. p. 3317.

Penn kindled at the discourses of this preacher ; they communicated sentiments in harmony with his own, which at the same time enlisted his feelings, and gained the assent of his understanding. With a few of his fellow students, who were wrought upon in a similar manner, he established meetings, in which they had devotional exercises according to their own views, and gradually deserted the regular forms of religious service in the University. This gave offence to the heads of the colleges, and Penn and all his associates were fined for nonconformity.

Such a step, although it might comport with the majesty of law, was scarcely dictated by the counsels of prudence. It was little calculated to tame the ardent spirits of young men, who believed themselves guided by the imperious calls of duty and truth in worshipping their Creator, and whose conscience, at least to their own minds, bore witness to their sincerity. Gentleness and persuasion, properly applied, may soothe the heat of youthful enthusiasm, but force will commonly add fuel to the flames. So it proved on the present occasion. It was at this time, that king Charles the Second resolved to restore the ancient costume to the University, and he sent orders accordingly that the students should be habited in the surplice. This relic of external forms and observances was extremely odious in the eyes of William Penn and his associates, who held simplicity of dress, and plainness of deportment, to be among the

brightest testimonies of the meekness, selfdenial, and spirituality, essential to a true christian. They could not endure such a monument of human vanity perpetually before their eyes, and Penn, together with several other students, among whom was Robert Spencer, afterwards Earl of Sunderland, made war on the surplice, and tore it from the shoulders of those who ventured abroad in this garb. So flagrant an outrage could not, of course, pass unnoticed, and the authors of it, with Penn among the number, were expelled from the University.

His father was much offended, that his rashness, or his imprudence, should bring upon him such a censure, and he was equally disappointed at the bias which he found his son's mind had received. He had looked forward with high expectations to the success, which he flattered himself would attend his son in the world, favoured by the many advantages which he was enabled to confer on him by his own high station, and his extensive connexions with the leading men in power. But when he found all these bright hopes likely to be blasted by what he deemed the perverseness or unjustifiable singularity of his son, it was a source of mortification and displeasure. He tried argument and expostulation in vain, and he ended by turning him out of doors. This effervescence of passion, however, did not continue long. The son was recalled, and the father thought to dissipate his wayward fancies by sending him abroad,

where new scenes would attract his attention, and new objects press on his thoughts. But this expedient failed, for instead of finding anything to detain him in the gay and varied amusements of Paris, he sought for employments more congenial with his state of mind, and his father heard of him attending the lectures and receiving the private instructions of the famous Moses Amyrault, a calvinistic professor of divinity at Saumur in France. Penn was now nineteen years old, and he read the Fathers, and applied himself to systematic theology for several months, under the direction of Amyrault.

From Saumur he pursued his travels to Italy, but had advanced no farther than Turin, when he received a letter from his father requesting his return to England, that he might take charge of the family during the absence of the Admiral, who was appointed to the command of a fleet then fitting out against the Dutch. Soon after his return he engaged in the study of the law, and was entered at Lincoln's Inn, where he remained somewhat more than a year, till the plague of 1666 compelled him to leave London.

Meantime the religious tendency of his mind was neither diverted nor weakened ; the vivacity of manners, which he had acquired during his travels, wore off by degrees ; he became sedate in his deportment, shunned the company of the gay, and took delight chiefly in the society of sober, religious people. His

father at length came back from his naval expedition, and was again chagrined to find his son leaning to his early habits, and possessing, apparently, no disposition to seek the honours, or attain the worldly distinctions, of which his connexions in life could not but give him a fair promise. One expedient only remained, and to this Admiral Penn determined to resort. He owned estates in Ireland, and was intimately acquainted with the Duke of Ormond, at that time Lord Lieutenant. Thither William was sent, first to the court of the Duke, and then to the immediate superintendence of the estates in the county of Cork. With his promptness and fidelity in the management of business, the father was entirely satisfied, but he was still grieved to learn that no change took place in the religious opinions and propensities of his son, and that neither the society of the great, nor the amusements of fashionable life, had any charms to win him from the pleasures of sober meditation, and the adherence to his peculiar views of religious faith and worship.

An incident occurred, which made the case still more aggravating. William Penn happened to be in Cork on a certain occasion, when it was announced, that Thomas Loe, the Oxford preacher, was about to hold a meeting in that city, where a small body of Quakers resided. This was a temptation not to be resisted; from the time of the disastrous events at the University, Penn had considered himself greatly

indebted to this man, as the person who had awakened in him a proper sense of the spiritual nature of religion, and taught him to despise the vanities of the world, and the solemn mockery of outward forms in devotion, which makes piety a shadow, blinds the eyes of conscience, and cheats the heart of its purest joys. He listened again, with renewed satisfaction, to his favourite preacher, and the result was, that he became a regular attendant on the meetings of the Quakers, and began to be known by that appellation. At one of these meetings he and eighteen others were seized and imprisoned, under pretence that they were violating the law respecting tumultuous assemblies; nor was he released till he had written to Lord Orrery, president of the council of Munster. This letter was manly and dignified, decorous in manner and noble in sentiment, discovering at once a conscious rectitude of purpose, and a fearless freedom in claiming the rights of conscience, and pleading the cause of toleration. It produced the desired effect, so far as his personal liberty was concerned, and he was immediately discharged from prison.

Intelligence of this event coming to his father, he sent for his son to return home, and again expostulated with him in an impressive and affectionate manner on the course he was pursuing. But it was too late; if a doubt had previously existed in the mind of William Penn, persecution had removed it; he had suffered in what he believed the sacred cause of con-

science and truth ; if his purpose had ever been wavering, it was now settled and unalterable. The Admiral made one effort more, however, which was to persuade him to remain with his hat off, while in the presence of the king, the duke of York, and himself. But this mark of outward deference his son declined, as incompatible with the simplicity of pure religion. The opinion of the early Quakers concerning the ceremony of uncovering the head as a token of respect, or of deference to a person present, is thus described by Mr Clarkson. "They took it for granted, that the use of the hat in the way described was either to show honour, respect, submission, or some similar feeling of the mind ; but they contended, that, used as it then was, it was no more a criterion of these than mourning was a criterion of sorrow. The custom, therefore, in their opinion, led to repeated acts of insincerity. A show was held out of the mind's intention, where no such intention existed. Now christianity was never satisfied but with the truth. It forbad all false appearances. It allowed no action to be resorted to, that was not correspondent with the feelings of the heart. Secondly, in the case where the custom was intended to have any meaning, it was generally the sign of flattery ; but no man could give way to flattery without degrading himself, and at the same time unduly exalting the person whom he distinguished by it. Hence they gave to the custom the name of *hat worship*, a name which it bears among

them at the present day.”* Such were the reasons, which convinced William Penn, that it was his duty not to accede to his father’s request in the ceremony of the hat, even out of respect to the king himself. The Admiral was vexed at this persevering obstinacy in what appeared to him a thing of trifling importance as a matter of conscience, but which had become by the rules of society an innocent custom, constituting at once a test of good manners and of a regard for social order. His patience was again exhausted, his passions rose above his paternal feelings, and he compelled his son a second time to go from home under the weight of his severe displeasure.

He was now enlisted with his whole soul in the cause of the Quakers, and in the year 1668 he resolved to enter on the office of a preacher in that sect, and to devote his life to the promulgation of the tenets by which it was distinguished. No one, who has followed his progress thus far, and witnessed the inherent firmness of his mind and energy of his character, will doubt that he was true to his purpose. It was now that he entered the broad sphere of public life, and launched on the ocean of popular religious controversy, where, for upwards of forty years, he sustained himself as one of the most distinguished persons of the age in which he lived.

* Clarkson’s Memoirs of the Private and Public Life of William Penn. Chap. III.

He had scarcely commenced his ministerial career, when he was furnished with convincing proofs, that tranquillity and personal comfort were the last things of which he could cherish any good hope in the discharge of his new duties. To be the preacher of an unpopular faith, to encounter prejudices and endeavour to eradicate errors, to expose the mischiefs of false religion, and call on men to relinquish their ancient belief and habits, was not a task calculated to secure rewards of gratitude, or to make the path of life peaceful and smooth. Hosts of adversaries came forward, but no power of opposition could daunt the spirit of William Penn. His zeal and exertions were adequate to every occasion, and by example and exhortation, by preaching and writing, he boldly confronted his enemies, and stood forth as the determined and unwearied champion of the cause he had espoused.

His first publication was entitled *Truth Exalted*, and was designed to explain the principles of his faith, to show that they were built on divine authority, that they were the true principles of pure and vital religion, far removed from human traditions and profane ceremonies, and eminently calculated to bring forth the genuine fruits of christianity, meekness, love, charity, and a good life. The point of the treatise consisted in showing, that truth was exalted in the faith and practice of the Quakers, whom bigoted sectaries, or ignorant and designing men, had been free to

calumniate as void of religion, as heretics, or infidels. The field of controversy was now fairly open, and William Penn's labours daily increased on his hands.

Shortly after this time a publication appeared, under the title of a "Guide to True Religion," in which the author undertook to point out the way by which a person must arrive at a true christian faith; and that was to believe a certain set of articles kindly strung together by the writer, and honoured with the name of a christian's creed. All who deviated from this way, or in other words, all who did not hang their faith implicitly on this creed, were declared to be without the pale of salvation, and bewildered in the hopeless region of infidelity. Among these outcasts the author particularly recounted Papists, Socinians, and Quakers. This treatise found its way into the hands of William Penn, and, as expressed by his biographer, "it set him as it were on fire." He could not brook the arrogance, which should consign to perdition a fellow mortal, who could not violate conscience by pretending to believe what his understanding pronounced to be false and at variance with the plain light of Scripture; he had no patience with the insufferable pride and antichristian spirit, which should look down as from a higher and holier eminence, and heap anathemas on the head of a brother, under the hypocritical garb of a pretended concern for his eternal welfare; he could not endure the overbearing selfsufficiency, which should rail

against the Papists for claiming infallibility, and at the same time set itself up as a universal judge, scattering the poison of calumny and the arrows of death without mercy and without shame ; he might pity the ravings of deluded bigotry, and look with compassion on the extravagancies of a sickly fancy, but he was indignant at the audacity which passed a judgment, that belonged only to the Searcher of hearts, and at the hypocrisy of him, who would exalt his own goodness by fixing a stigma on the faith of his brethren, where the eye of malice could not detect a spot on the character. He felt himself bound to reply to so unjust a representation of the means of obtaining proper views of christianity, and to expose and censure so flagrant an abuse of its spirit and purposes. This was done in a small work, called the *Guide Mistaken*, in which he confuted the doctrines of his opponent, and placed in a clear light not only the errors of his creed, but the faults of his heart and practice.

This treatise had but recently gone out to the world, when an occurrence took place, which proved to be of no inconsiderable importance in its consequences. As it has a particular bearing on that portion of Penn's writings selected for the present work, it will doubtless not be amiss to dwell upon it in this place at considerable length. It is thus described by Mr Clarkson.

"Two persons belonging to a Presbyterian congregation in Spital Fields went one day to the meetinghouse of the Quakers, merely to learn what their religious doctrines were. It happened that they were converted there. This news being carried to Thomas Vincent their pastor, it so stirred him up, that he not only used his influence to prevent the converts in question from attending there again, but he decried the doctrines of the Quakers as damnable, and said many unhandsome things against them. This slander having gone abroad, William Penn, accompanied by George Whitehead, an eminent minister among the Quakers, who had already written twenty nine pamphlets in their defence, went to Vincent, and demanded an opportunity of defending their principles publicly. This, after a good deal of demur, was agreed to. The Presbyterian meetinghouse was fixed upon for this purpose, and the day and hour appointed also. "When the time came the Quakers presented themselves at the door; but Vincent, to ensure a majority on his side, had filled a great part of the meetinghouse with his own hearers, so that there was but little room for them. Penn, however, and Whitehead, with a few others of the Society, pushed their way in. They had scarcely done this, when they heard it proclaimed aloud, that 'the Quakers held damnable doctrines.' Immediately upon this Whitehead showed himself. He began, in answer to the charge, to explain aloud what the principles of the

society really were ; but here Vincent interrupted him, contending that it would be a better way of proceeding for himself to examine the Quakers as to their own creed. He then put a proposal to this effect to the auditors. They agreed to it, and their voice was law.

“ Vincent, having carried his point, began by asking the Quakers, ‘ Whether they owned one Godhead subsisting in three distinct and separate persons ? ’ Penn and his friend Whitehead both asserted that this, delivered as it was by Vincent, was no scripture doctrine. Vincent, in reply, formed a syllogism upon the words ‘ There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one, ’ and deduced from these the doctrine of three separate subsistences and yet of but one Deity. Whitehead immediately rejected the term ‘ subsistence, ’ as nowhere to be found in the Scriptures, and demanded that their opponents should explain it, as God did not wrap up his truths in heathenish metaphysics, but delivered them in plain language. Upon this, several attempted an explanation ; but the sum of all their answers was, that subsistence meant either person or the mode of a substance. To these substitutes William Penn and Whitehead both objected. They urged many texts from Scripture in behalf of their objection, and having done this, they begged leave to ask Vincent one question in their turn, namely, ‘ Whether God was to be understood in

an abstractive sense from his substance?" But the audience pronounced this to be a point more fit for admiration than dispute."*

Thus was the debate kept up till very late at night, and often with symptoms of tumult and improper conduct on the part of the audience. This consisted almost wholly of the friends of Vincent; and Penn and Whitehead had no alternative but to submit to such method of controversy as they might impose, and to such indignities as their zeal, heated by the example of their pastor, prompted them to inflict. Several persons discovered great intemperance in this respect, as they "laughed, hissed, and stigmatised the Quakers by various opprobrious names, of which that of Jesuit was exclusively bestowed on William Penn." The meeting finally broke up in a disorderly manner, after Vincent had abruptly left the house, and his party had extinguished the candles. Vincent agreed to meet them on another day, but he could not afterwards be made to fulfil his promise.

It cannot be supposed, that under the circumstances above enumerated, the weight of argument could have had much effect on either side. Against the Quakers in particular, to such a degree were the passions of the people excited, that they were in no condition to hear their grounds of defence, and much less to consider calmly the arguments advanced by them in support

* Clarkson's Life of William Penn, Chap. IV.

of their faith. In this state of things William Penn resolved to come before the public with a written testimony, touching the topics which had been agitated in the late conference with the Presbyterians. To this end he wrote the *Sandy Foundation Shaken*, in which are discussed in a very masterly manner the three great doctrines of the Trinity, Atonement, and Imputed Righteousness. From Scripture and reason he proved the common notions in regard to these doctrines to be erroneous, traced them to their origin, and showed the mischievous consequences to which they must necessarily lead. Few works are marked with a more rigid logic, a greater clearness of conception, or force of argument.

The *Sandy Foundation Shaken* produced much excitement when it appeared, and many dignitaries of the established church, especially the bishop of London, professed to be offended at the freedom of the author. "It was then a high crime," says Clarkson, "to defend publicly and openly as in print, the unity of God detached from his trinitarian nature." The usual arguments of intolerance and bigotry were resorted to, and William Penn was sent a prisoner to the Tower for presuming to defend his character against calumny, by showing the public that he had a reason for his faith.

While in prison he was for a time kept in close confinement, and treated with severity, not even being allowed to see his friends. In this situation he was

informed, that the bishop of London had declared he should either recant, or end his days in prison. When Penn heard this, he replied to the person who gave him the intelligence, "All is well; I wish they had told me so before, since the expecting of a release put a stop to some business. Thou mayest tell my father, who, I know, will ask thee, these words; that my prison shall be my grave before I will budge a jot; for I owe my conscience to no mortal man; I have no need to fear; God will make amends for all. They are mistaken in me; I value not their threats nor resolutions, for they shall know I can weary out their malice and peevishness; and in me shall they all behold a resolution above fear, conscience above cruelty, and a baffle put to all their designs by the spirit of patience, the compassion of all the tribulated flock of the blessed Jesus, who is the author and finisher of the faith that overcomes the world, yea, death and hell too. Neither great nor good things were ever attained without loss and hardships. He that would reap and not labour, must faint with the wind, and perish in disappointments; but an hair of my head shall not fall without the providence of my Father, who is over all."* The spirit, which could utter itself in a strain like this, within the gloomy walls of a prison, was not to be overcome with force, nor intimidated with boasts of power, and threats of suffering.

* See the Preface to an Edition of the *Sandy Foundation Shaken*, published in London, 1818. p. v.

To render himself unconscious of the weary hours as they passed, Penn applied himself, during his imprisonment, to study and writing. It was here that he wrote one of his most celebrated works, entitled *No Cross, No Crown*. This would be regarded as a very remarkable performance from any hand, but when we consider that the author was only twenty five years old when he wrote it, that he was closely confined in a prison, and that it was completed under these circumstances within a period of less than six months, we cannot but look on the mind which produced it, as of the highest order, disciplined and matured in a degree very uncommon at that age. The title sufficiently indicates the subject of the work, which was in accordance with his condition and feelings when he wrote. This treatise, at the same time it is an ingenious defence of the religious opinions and conduct of its author, and of the Quakers generally, abounds in practical wisdom and deep thoughts, and discovers a wide range of reading in ancient and modern authors.

He also composed while in prison a small tract called *Innocency with her open Face*, which was occasioned by a belief, that his views of the trinity, contained in the Sandy Foundation Shaken, had been misunderstood. In this tract he supports anew his objections to the doctrines of satisfaction and imputed righteousness, and of the tripersonal nature of the Deity. but declares, that he means not to deny the divinity of Christ. Neither in this tract, nor in his writings ge-

rally, where he often recurs to the subject, is it easy come at his precise notions respecting the nature of Christ. He speaks with more directness and perspicuity in the *Sandy Foundation Shaken*, than any where else, but when all he has said in different places is brought together and compared, there is considerable obscurity as to the exact impressions existing in his own mind. He denies a trinity of persons, and yet holds Christ to be in some sense God. As far as it can be understood, his scheme approaches nearly to that of Dr Watts, which takes the divinity of Christ to be a sort of indwelling of the Father, constituting a union so close, that the name of the Deity may properly be applied to the Son.

After remaining in prison seven months, he was suddenly released by order of the king. His enemies have accused him of recanting his sentiments, and thus procuring his freedom at the expense of his consistency, or what is worse, of his sincerity ; and the tract just mentioned is referred to as a proof of the charge. But this accusation has more in it of ill nature than of truth. It does not appear, that the tract had anything to do with Penn's release ; this was procured by the interposition of the Duke of York, who was his father's particular friend.

After being again restored to liberty, Penn returned to his pastoral duties, and, with a zeal in no degree diminished by suffering, preached the doctrines which he had done so much to defend and

impress on the world. The most cheering circumstance, which happened to him at this time, was the reconciliation of his father. At his request he went over again to Ireland for the purpose of executing some commission in the way of business. He preached in Dublin, Cork, and different parts of the Island, and wrote and distributed tracts explaining his religious views. By his intercession with the Lord Lieutenant he also succeeded in releasing several of his brethren from confinement, who had been imprisoned on account of their religious tenets. He returned to England, and took up his residence in his father's house.

The leading particulars in the life of William Penn have thus been enumerated, as far as they are necessary to illustrate those parts of his writings, which have been chosen for insertion in the present collection. Were this fruitful and interesting topic to be pursued to the end of his eventful life, it would occupy a vastly greater space, than would be consistent with the plan of this publication.

He continued a preacher as long as he lived, and for many years made frequent excursions in England and Wales, in the exercise of his ministerial functions. In 1670 he was seized while preaching in London, and imprisoned in Newgate, under pretence of his violating the Conventicle Act. He was tried at the Old Bailey and acquitted. The details of this trial, as recorded by Clarkson, are very curious, both as

trating the spirit of the times, and the character powers of William Penn. He twice visited the continent, and made the tour of Holland and Germany, in the character of a preacher. In 1682 he obtained a charter for the tract of country now known as the State of Pennsylvania, and came over to take possession of it the year following. He remained three years, and then went back to England. In 1699 he again visited Pennsylvania, and continued there a second time nearly two years, when he embarked for England, and never came more to this country. In 1710 he was severely attacked with apoplexy; his faculties became gradually impaired, and for five or six years he was very little abroad. He died on the 30th of July, 1718, in the seventy fourth year of his

His works were very numerous, chiefly on religion, morals, and politics. Some of them passed through several editions during his lifetime, particularly *No Taxation without Representation*, *No Crown*, and the *Sandy Foundation Shaken*. The first collection was first made in 1726, and published in two volumes folio, to which was prefixed a life of the author. In 1771 was published an edition of "Select Works" in one volume folio; and again in 1782 this selection was printed in five volumes 8vo. To this also is attached a life of the author, but it is neither full, judicious, nor satisfactory. Clark's *Life of Penn* is the best, as being faithful and concise, plain and unpretending; but the literary exe-

cution is quite below the subject, and there is still wanting an elegant biographical memoir of the founder of Pennsylvania.

The present notice cannot be more appropriately closed, than by the following eloquent eulogy contained in Mr Du Ponceau's Discourse on the Early History of Pennsylvania.

"William Penn stands the first among the law-givers, whose names and deeds are recorded in history. Shall we compare with him Lycurgus, Solon, Romulus, those founders of military commonwealths, who organised their citizens in dreadful array against the rest of their species, taught them to consider their fellowmen as barbarians, and themselves as alone worthy to rule over the earth? What benefit did mankind derive from their boasted institutions? Interrogate the shades of those who fell in the mighty contests between Athens and Lacedæmon, between Carthage and Rome, and between Rome and the rest of the universe. But see William Penn with weaponless hand, sitting down peaceably with his followers in the midst of savage nations, whose only occupation was shedding the blood of their fellowmen, disarming them by his justice, and teaching them, for the first time, to view a stranger without distrust. See them bury their tomahawks in his presence, so deep that man shall never be able to find them again. See them under the shade of the thick groves of Coaquannock extend the bright chain of friendship, and solemnly promise

to preserve it as long as the sun and moon shall endure. See him then with his companions establishing his commonwealth on the sole basis of religion, morality, and universal love, and adopting as the fundamental maxim of his government, the rule handed down to us from heaven, *Glory to God on high, and on earth peace and good will to all men.* Here was a spectacle for the potentates of the earth to look upon, an example for them to imitate. But the potentates of the earth did not see, or if they saw, they turned away their eyes from the sight; they did not hear, or if they heard, they shut their ears against the voice, which called out to them from the wilderness,

Discite justitiam moniti et non temnere Divos.

The character of William Penn alone sheds a never fading lustre on our history."

THE

SANDY FOUNDATION

SHAKEN.

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SANDY FOUNDATION

SHAKEN.*

The Trinity of distinct and separate Persons in the Unity of Essence, refuted from Scripture.

“AND he said, Lord God, there is no god like unto thee. To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal, saith the Holy One?†—I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God besides me. Thus saith the Lord thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. I will also praise thee, O my God; unto thee will I sing—O Holy One of Israel. Jehovah shall be One—and

* The original title of this tract at full length is as follows; “The Sandy Foundation Shaken; or those so generally believed and applauded Doctrines,—One God subsisting in three distinct and separate Persons,—The impossibility of God’s pardoning Sinners without a plenary Satisfaction,—The justification of impure Persons by an imputative Righteousness,—confuted from the Authority of Scripture Testimonies and Right Reason. By WILLIAM PENN; a Builder on that Foundation which cannot be moved.”

† 1 Kings viii. 23; Isa. xl. 25.

his name One.”* Which, with a cloud of other testimonies that might be urged, evidently demonstrate, that in the days of the first covenant and prophets, *but One was the Holy God, and God but that Holy One*.—Again, “And Jesus said unto him, why callest thou me good? there is none good but One, and that is God. And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee (Father) the Only true God. Seeing it is one God that shall justify. There be gods many, but unto us there is but One God, the Father, of whom are all things. One God and Father, who is above all. For there is one God. To the Only wise God be glory now and forever.”† From all which I shall lay down this one assertion, that the testimonies of Scripture, both under the law, and since the gospel dispensation, *declare one to be God, and God to be One*, on which I shall raise this argument.

If God, as the Scriptures testify, hath never been declared or believed, but as *the Holy One*; then will it follow, that *God is not an Holy Three*, nor doth subsist in *Three distinct and separate Holy Ones*; but the before cited Scriptures undeniably prove that One is God, and God only is that Holy One; therefore he cannot be divided into, or subsist in an Holy Three, or three distinct and separate Holy Ones. Neither can this receive the least prejudice from that frequent but

* Isa. xlv. 5, 6; xlviii; Psalm lxxi. 22; Zec. xiv. 9.

† Matt. xix. 17; John xvii. 3; Rom. iii. 30; 1 Cor. viii. 5, 6; Eph. iv. 6; 1 Tim. ii. 5; Jude v. 25.

apertinent distinction, that He is One in substance, ut Three in persons or subsistences ; since God was not declared or believed incompletely, or without his subsistences ; nor did He require homage from his creatures as an incomplete or abstracted Being, but as God the Holy One, for so he should be manifested and worshipped without that which was absolutely necessary to himself ; so that either the testimonies of the aforementioned Scriptures are to be believed concerning God, that he is entirely and completely, not abstractly and distinctly the Holy One ; or else their authority to be denied by these Trinitarians ; and on the contrary, if they pretend to credit those holy testimonies, they must necessarily conclude their kind of trinity a fiction.

Refuted from right Reason.

1. If there be three distinct and separate persons, then three distinct and separate substances, because every person is inseparable from its own substance, and as there is no person that is not a substance in common acceptation among men, so do the Scriptures plentifully agree herein ; and since the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Spirit is God, (whic their opinion necessitates them to confess) then unle the Father, Son and Spirit are three distinct nothin they must be three distinct substances, and consequently three distinct gods.

2. It is farther proved, if it be considered, either the divine persons are finite or infinite. I

first, then something finite is inseparable to the infinite substance, whereby something finite is in God; if the last, then three distinct infinities, three omnipotents, three eternals, and so three gods.

3. If each person be God, and that God subsists in three persons, then in each person are three persons or gods, and from three they will increase to nine, and so *ad infinitum*.

4. But if they shall deny the three persons or subsistences to be infinite, for so there would unavoidably be three gods, it will follow that they must be finite, and so the absurdity is not abated from what it was; for that of one substance having three subsistences is not greater than that an infinite being should have three finite modes of subsisting. But though that mode which is finite cannot answer to a substance that is infinite; yet to try if we can make their principle to consist, let us conceive that three persons, which may be finite separately, make up an infinite conjunctly; however this will follow, that they are no more incommunicable or separate, nor properly subsistences, but a subsistence; for the infinite substance cannot find a bottom or subsistence in any one or two, therefore, jointly. And here I am also willing to overlook finiteness in the Father, Son, and Spirit, which this doctrine must suppose.

5. Again, if these three distinct persons are one, with some one thing, as they say they are with the Godhead, then are not they incommunicable among

themselves ; but so much the contrary as to be one in the place of another ; for if that the only God is the Father, and Christ be that only God, then is Christ the Father. So if that one God be the son, and the spirit that one God, then is the spirit the son, and so round. Nor is it possible to stop, or that it should be otherwise, since if the divine nature be inseparable from the three persons, or communicated to each, and each person have the whole divine nature, then is the son in the Father, and the spirit in the son, unless that the Godhead be as incommunicable to the persons, as they are reported to be amongst themselves ; or that the three persons have distinctly allotted them such a proportion of the divine nature, as is not communicable to each other ; which is alike absurd. Much more might be said to manifest the gross contradiction of this trinitarian doctrine, as vulgarly received ; but I must be brief.

Information and Caution.

Before I shall conclude this head, it is requisite I should inform thee, reader, concerning its original. Thou mayest assure thyself, it is not from the Scriptures nor reason, since so expressly repugnant ; although all broachers of their own inventions strongly endeavour to reconcile them with that holy record. Know then, my friend, *it was born above three hundred years after the ancient Gospel was declared ;* and that through the nice distinctions and too daring cu-

riosity of the Bishop of Alexandria, who being as hotly opposed by Arius, their zeal so reciprocally blew the fire of contention, animosity, and persecution, till at last they sacrificed each other to their mutual revenge.

Thus it was conceived in *ignorance*, brought forth and maintained by *cruelty*; for though he that was strongest imposed his opinion, persecuting the contrary, yet the scale turning on the trinitarian side, it has there continued through all the Romish generations; and notwithstanding it hath obtained the name of Athanasian from Athanasius, (a stiff man, witness his carriage towards Constantine the emperor,) because supposed to have been most concerned in the framing that creed in which this doctrine is asserted; yet have I never seen one copy void of a suspicion, rather to have been the results of Popish schoolmen; which I could render more perspicuous did not brevity necessitate me to an omission.

Be therefore cautioned, reader, not to embrace the determination of prejudiced councils for evangelical doctrine, which the Scriptures bear no certain testimony to, neither was believed by the primitive saints, or thus stated by any I have read of in the first, second, or third centuries; particularly Irenæus, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Origen, with many others, who appear wholly foreign to the matter in controversy. But seeing that private spirits, and those none of the most ingenious, have been the parents and guardians of this so generally received doctrine;

let the time past suffice, and be admonished to apply thy mind unto that light and grace which bring salvation ; that by obedience thereunto, those mists tradition hath cast before thy eyes may be expelled, and thou receive a certain knowledge of that God, whom to know is life eternal, not to be divided, but *One pure, entire and eternal Being*, who in the fulness of time *sent forth his Son*, as the true light which enlighteneth every man ; that whosoever followed him (the light) might be translated from the dark notions and vain conversations of men to this holy light, in which only sound judgment and eternal life are obtainable ; who so many hundred years since, in person, testified the virtue of it, and has communicated unto all, such a proportion as may enable them to follow his example.

The vulgar Doctrine of Satisfaction, being dependent on the second Person of the Trinity, refuted from Scripture.

DOCTRINE.

‘THAT man having transgressed the righteous law of God, and so exposed to the penalty of eternal wrath, it is altogether impossible for God to remit or forgive without a plenary satisfaction ; and that there was no other way by which God could obtain satisfaction, or save men, than by inflicting the penalty of infinite wrath and vengeance on Jesus Christ, the

second person of the trinity, who, for sins past, present, and to come, hath wholly borne and paid it, whether for all, or but some, to the offended infinite justice of his Father.'

1. "And the Lord passed by before him (Moses) and proclaimed, the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin."* From whence I shall draw this position; that since God has proclaimed himself a gracious, merciful, and forgiving God, it is not inconsistent with his nature to remit without any other consideration than his own love; otherwise He could not justly come under the imputation of so many gracious attributes, with whom it is impossible to pardon, and necessary to exact the payment of the utmost farthing.

2. "For if ye turn again to the Lord, the Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you."† Where, how natural is it to observe, that God's remission is grounded on their repentance; and not that it is impossible for God to pardon without plenary satisfaction, since the possibility, nay certainty of the contrary, viz. his grace and mercy, is the great motive or reason of that loving invitation to return.

3. "They hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments; but Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful."‡ Can the honest-

* Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. † 2 Chron. xxx. 9. ‡ Neh. ix. 16, 17.

hearted reader conceive, that God should thus be mercifully qualified, whilst executing the rigour of the law transgressed, or not acquitting without the debt be paid him by another ? I suppose not.

4. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."* Come, let the unprejudiced judge, if this scripture doctrine is not very remote from saying, his nature cannot forgive sin, therefore let Christ pay him full satisfaction, or He will certainly be avenged ; which is the substance of that strange opinion.

5. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel ; I will put my law in their inward parts ; I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."† Here is God's mere grace asserted, against the pretended necessity of a satisfaction to procure his remission ; and this Paul acknowledgeth to be the dispensation of the Gospel, in his eighth chapter to the Hebrews ; so that this new doctrine doth not only contradict the nature and design of the second covenant, but seems, in short, to discharge God both from his mercy and omnipotence.

6. "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage ? He retaineth not his anger for-

* Isa. iv. 7.

† Jer. xxxi. 31, 33, 34.

ever, because He delighteth in mercy.”* Can there be a more express passage to clear, not only the possibility, but real inclinations in God to pardon sin, and “not retain his anger for ever?” Since the prophet seems to challenge all other gods, to try their excellency by his God; herein describing the supremacy of his power and super-excellency of his nature, that “He pardoneth iniquity, and retaineth not his anger forever.” So that if the satisfactionists should ask the question, who is a God like unto ours, that cannot pardon iniquity, nor pass by transgression, but retaineth his anger until somebody make him satisfaction? I answer, many amongst the harsh and severe rulers of the nation; but as for my God, He is exalted above them all, upon the throne of his mercy, “who pardoneth iniquity, and retaineth not his anger forever, but will have compassion upon us.”

7. “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.”† Where nothing can be more obvious, than that which is forgiven, is not paid; and if it is our duty to forgive our debtors, without a satisfaction received, and that God is to forgive us, as we forgive them, then is a satisfaction totally excluded. Christ farther paraphrases upon that part of his prayer, ver. 14, “For if ye forgive their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.” Where he as well argues the equity of God’s forgiving them from their forgiving others, as he encourages them to forgive

* Micah vii. 18.

† Matt. vi. 12.

others from the example of God's mercy in forgiving them ; which is more amply expressed, chap. xviii. where the kingdom of heaven, that consists in righteousness, is represented by a king, "who, upon his debtor's petition, had compassion, and forgave him ; but the same treating his fellow servant without the least forbearance, the king condemned his unrighteousness, and delivered him over to the tormentors." But how had this been a fault in the servant, if his king's mercy had not been proposed for his example ? How most unworthy therefore is it of God, and blasphemous, may I justly term it, for any to assert, that forgiveness impossible to God, which is not only possible, but enjoined to men !

8. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."* By which it appears that God's love is not the effect of Christ's satisfaction, but Christ is the proper gift and effect of God's love.

9. "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him, shall receive remission of sins."† So that remission came by believing his testimony, and obeying his precepts, and not by a strict satisfaction.

10. "If God be for us, who can be against us ? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for

* John iii. 16.

† Acts x. 43.

us all.”* Which evidently declares it to be God’s act of love, otherwise, if he must be paid, he should be at the charge of his own satisfaction, for he delivered up the Son.

11. “And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation, to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.”† How undeniably apparent is it, that God is so far from standing off in high displeasure, and upon his own terms contracting with his Son for a satisfaction, as being otherwise incapable to be reconciled, that he became himself the reconciler by Christ, and afterwards by the apostles, his ambassadors, to whom was committed the ministry of reconciliation !

12. “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.”‡ Now what relation satisfaction has to forgiveness of sins, or how any can construe grace to be strict justice, the meanest understanding may determine.

13. “But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus.”§ He does not say that God’s justice, in consideration of Christ’s satisfaction, acquitted us from sins past, present, and to come, and therefore hath called us to his eternal glory ; but from his grace.

* Rom. viii. 31, 32. † 2 Cor. v. 18, 19. ‡ Eph. i. 7. § 1 Pet. v. 10.

14. "In this was manifest the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him."* Which plainly attributes Christ, in his doctrine, life, miracles, death, and sufferings, to God, as the gift and expression of his eternal love, for the salvation of men.

1. In abolishing that other covenant, which consisted in external and shadowy ordinances, and that made none clean as concerning the conscience.

2. In promulgating his message, of a most free and universal tender of life and salvation, unto all that believed and followed him, (the light) in all his righteousness, the very end of his appearance being to destroy the works of the devil, and which every man only comes to experience, as he walks in an holy subject-ion to that measure of light and grace, wherewith the fulness hath enlightened him.

3. In seconding his doctrines with signs, miracles, and a most innocent selfdenying life.

4. In ratifying and confirming all, with great love and holy resignation, by the offering up of his body to be crucified by wicked hands; who is now ascended far above all heavens, and is thereby become a most complete captain, and perfect example.

So that I can by no means conclude, but openly declare, that the Scriptures of truth are not only silent in reference to this doctrine of rigid satisfaction, but

* 1 John iv. 9.

that it is altogether inconsistent with the dignity of God, and very repugnant to the conditions, nature, and tendency of that second covenant, concerning which their testimony is so clear.

The Absurdities, that unavoidably follow the Comparison of this Doctrine with the Sense of Scripture.

1. THAT God is gracious to forgive, and yet it is impossible for him, unless the debt be fully satisfied.

2. That the finite and impotent creature is more capable of extending mercy and forgiveness, than the infinite and omnipotent Creator.

3. "That God so loved the world, he gave his only Son to save it;" and yet that God stood off in high displeasure, and Christ gave himself to God as a complete satisfaction to his offended justice; with many more such like gross consequences that might be drawn.

Refuted from right Reason.

But if we should grant a scripture silence, as to the necessity of Christ's so satisfying his Father's justice; yet so manifest would be the contradictions, and foul the repugnances to right reason, that he who had not veiled his understanding with the dark suggestions of unwarrantable tradition, or contracted his judgment to the implicit apprehensions of some over valued acquaintance, might with great facility discriminate to a

full resolution in this point ; for admitting God to be a creator, or he to whom the debt should be paid ; and Christ, he that satisfies or pays it on the behalf of man, the debtor ; this question will arise, Whether he paid that debt *as God*, or *man*, or *both* ? (to use their own terms.)

Not as God.

1. In that it divides the unity of the Godhead, by two distinct acts, of being offended and not offended ; of condemning justice and redeeming mercy ; of requiring a satisfaction and then making it.

2. Because if Christ pay the debt *as God*, then the Father and the Spirit being God, they also pay the debt.

3. Since God is to be satisfied, and that Christ is God, he consequently is to be satisfied ; and who shall satisfy his infinite justice ?

4. But if Christ has satisfied God the Father, Christ being also God, it will follow then that he has satisfied himself, which cannot be.

5. But since God the Father was once to be satisfied, and that it is impossible he should do it himself, nor yet the Son or Spirit, because the same God ; it naturally follows, that the debt remains unpaid, and these satisfactionists thus far are still at a loss.

Not as Man.

6. The justice offended being infinite, his satisfaction ought to bear a proportion therewith, which Jesus

Christ, *as man*, could never pay, he being finite, and from a finite cause could not proceed an infinite effect; for so man may be said to bring forth God, since nothing below the Divinity itself can rightly be styled infinite.

Not as God and Man.

7. For where two mediums, or middle propositions, are singly inconsistent with the nature of the end for which they were at first propounded, their conjunction does rather augment than lessen the difficulty of its accomplishment; and this I am persuaded must be obvious to every unbiassed understanding.

But admitting one of these three mediums possible for the payment of an infinite debt; yet, pray observe the most unworthy and ridiculous consequences, that unavoidably will attend the impossibility of God's pardoning sinners without a satisfaction.

Consequences irreligious and irrational.

1. That it is unlawful and impossible for God Almighty to be gracious and merciful, or to pardon transgressors; than which what is more unworthy of God?

2. That God was inevitably compelled to this way of saving men; the highest affront to his uncontrollable nature.

3. That it was unworthy of God to pardon, but not to inflict punishment on the innocent, or require a satisfaction where there was nothing due.

4. It doth not only disacknowledge the true virtue and real intent of Christ's life and death, but entirely deprives God of that praise which is owing to his truest love and goodness.

5. It represents the Son more kind and compassionate than the Father; whereas, if both be the same God, then either the Father is as loving as the Son, or the Son as angry as the Father.

6. It robs God of the gift of his Son for our redemption (which the Scriptures attribute to the unmerited love he had for the world), in affirming the Son purchased that redemption from the Father, by the gift of himself to God, as our complete satisfaction.

7. Since Christ could not pay what was not his own, it follows, that in the payment of his own, the case still remains equally grievous; since the debt is not hereby absolved or forgiven, but transferred only; and by consequence we are no better provided for salvation than before, owing *that* now to the Son, which was once owing to the Father.

8. It no way renders man beholding, [beholden] or in the least obliged to God; since by their doctrine He would not have abated us, nor did He Christ the least farthing; so that the acknowledgments are peculiarly the Son's, which destroys the whole current of scripture testimony for his good will towards men. O the infamous protraiture this doctrine draws of the Infinite Goodness! Is this your retribution, O injurious satisfactionists?

9. That God's justice is satisfied for sins past, present, and to come ; whereby God and Christ have lost both their power of enjoining godliness, and all prerogative of punishing disobedience ; for what is once paid is not revokable ; and if punishment should arrest any for their debts, it either argues a breach on God's or Christ's part, or else that it has not been sufficiently solved, and the penalty completely sustained by another ; forgetting "that every one must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to receive according to the things done in the body ; yea, every one must give an account of himself to God."* But many more are the gross absurdities and blasphemies, that are the genuine fruits of this so confidently believed doctrine of satisfaction.

Caution.

Let me advise, nay warn thee, reader, by no means to admit an entertainment of this principle, by whomsoever recommended ; since it does not only divest the glorious God of his sovereign power, both to pardon and punish, but as certainly insinuates a licentiousness, at least a liberty, that unbecomes the nature of that ancient Gospel once preached amongst the primitive saints, and that from an apprehension of a satisfaction once paid for all. Whereas I must tell thee, that unless thou seriously repent, and no more grieve God's holy Spirit, placed in thy inmost parts,

* 2 Cor. xv. 10 ; Rom. xiv. 12.

but art thereby taught to deny all ungodliness, and led into all righteousness ; at the tribunal of the great Judge, thy plea shall prove invalid, and thou receive thy reward without respect to any other thing than the deeds done in the body. “ Be not deceived, God will not be mocked ; such as thou sowest, such shalt thou reap ;”* which leads me to the consideration of my third head, viz. ‘ Justification by an imputative righteousness.’



The Justification of impure Persons, by an imputative Righteousness, refuted from Scripture.

DOCTRINE.

‘ THAT there is no other way for sinners to be justified in the sight of God, than by the imputation of that righteousness of Christ, so long since performed personally ; and that sanctification is consequential, not antecedent.’

1. “ Keep thee far from a false matter ; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not ; for I will not justify the wicked.”† Whereon I ground this argument, that since God has prescribed an inoffensive life, as that which can only give acceptance with Him, and on the contrary hath determined never to justify the wicked ; then will it necessarily follow, that unless this so much believed imputative righteousness had

* Gal. vi. 7.

† Exod. xxiii. 7.

that effectual influence, as to regenerate and redeem the soul from sin, on which the malediction lies, he is as far to seek for justification as before ; for whilst a person is really guilty of a false matter, I positively assert, from the authority and force of this scripture, he cannot be in a state of justification ; and as God will not justify the wicked, so, by the acknowledged reason of contraries, the just He will never condemn, but they, and they only, are the justified of God.

2. "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are an abomination to the Lord."* It would very opportunely be observed, that if it is so great an abomination in men to justify the wicked, and condemn the just, how much greater would it be in God, which this doctrine of imputative righteousness necessarily does imply, that so far disengages God from the person justified, as that his guilt shall not condemn him, nor his innocency justify him ? But will not the abomination appear greatest of all, when God shall be found condemning the just, on purpose to justify the wicked, and that He is thereto compelled, or else no salvation ; which is the tendency of their doctrine, 'who imagine the righteous and merciful God to condemn and punish his innocent Son, that he having satisfied for our sins, we might be justified (whilst unsanctified) by the imputation of his perfect righteousness.' *O ! why should this horrible thing be contended for by Christians ?*

* Prov. xvii. 15.

3. "The son shall not bear the iniquity of his father; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die. Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive; yet saith the house of Israel, the ways of the Lord are not equal; are not my ways equal?"* If this was once equal, it is so still, for God is unchangeable; and therefore I shall draw this argument, that the condemnation or justification of persons, is not from the imputation of another's righteousness, but the actual performance and keeping of God's righteous statutes or commandments, otherwise God should forget to be equal; therefore how wickedly unequal are those, who, not from scripture evidences, but their own dark conjectures and interpretations of obscure passages would frame a doctrine so manifestly inconsistent with God's most pure and equal nature; making him to condemn the righteous to death, and justify the wicked to life, from the imputation of another's righteousness;—a most unequal way indeed!

4. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father. Whosoever heareth

* Ezek. xviii. 20, 26, 27, 29.

these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock," &c.* How very fruitful are the Scriptures of truth, in testimonies against this absurd and dangerous doctrine ! These words seem to import a twofold righteousness ; the first consists in sacrifice, the last in obedience ; the one makes a talking, the other a doing Christian. I, in short, argue thus ; if none can enter into the kingdom of heaven, but they that do the Father's will, then none are justified, but they who do the Father's will, because none can enter into the kingdom but such as are justified. Since therefore there can be no admittance had, without performing that righteous will, and doing those holy and perfect sayings ; alas ! to what value will an imputative righteousness amount, when a poor soul shall awake polluted in his sin, by the hasty calls of death, to make its appearance before the judgment seat, where it is impossible to justify the wicked, or that any should escape uncondemned, but such as do the will of God ?

5. "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love."† From whence this argument doth naturally arise ; if none are truly justified that abide not in Christ's love, and that none abide in his love who keep not his commandments ;

* Matt. vii. 21, 24, 25.

† 1 John xvi. 10.

then consequently none are justified but such as keep his commandments. Besides, here is the most palpable opposition to an imputative righteousness that may be ; for Christ is so far from telling them of such a way of being justified, as that he informs them the reason why he abode in his Father's love, was his obedience ; and is so far from telling them of their being justified, whilst not abiding in his love, by virtue of his obedience imputed unto them, that unless they keep his commands, and obey for themselves, they shall be so remote from an acceptance, as wholly to be cast out ; in all which Christ is our example.

6. "Ye are my friends, if you do whatsoever I command you."* We have almost here the very words, but altogether the same matter, which affords us thus much, that without being Christ's friends, there is no being justified ; but unless we keep his commandments, it is impossible we should be his friends ; it therefore necessarily follows, that except we keep his commandments, there is no being justified ; or in short, thus ; if the way to be a friend is, to keep the commandments, then the way to be justified is to keep the commandments ; because none can obtain the quality of a friend, and remain unjustified, or be truly justified whilst an enemy ; which he certainly is that keeps not the commandments.

* John xv. 14.

7. "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified."* From whence how unanswerably may I observe, unless we become doers of that law, which Christ came not to destroy, but as our example to fulfil, we can never be justified before God; wherefore obedience is so absolutely necessary, that short of it there can be no acceptance. Nor let any fancy that Christ hath so fulfilled it for them, as to exclude their obedience from being requisite to their acceptance but as their pattern; "for unless ye follow me," saith Christ, "ye cannot be my disciples;" and it is not only repugnant to reason, but in this place particularly refuted; for if Christ had fulfilled it on our behalf and we not enabled to follow his example, there would not be doers, but one doer only, of the law, justified before God. In short, if without obedience to the righteous law none can be justified, then all our hearing of the law, with but the mere imputation of another's righteousness, whilst we are actually breakers of it, is excluded, as not justifying before God. "If you fulfil the royal law, ye do well; so speak ye, and so do ye, as they that shall be judged thereby."

8. "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die; but if ye, through the spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."† No man can be dead, and justified before God, for so he may be justified that

* Rom. ii. 13.

† Rom. viii. 13.

lives after the flesh ; therefore they only can be justified that are alive ; from whence this follows, if the living are justified and not the dead, and that none can live to God but such as have mortified the deeds of the body through the spirit, then none can be justified but they who have mortified the deeds of the body through the spirit ; so that justification does not go before, but is subsequential to the mortification of lusts and sanctification of the soul, through the spirit's operation.

9. "For as many as are led by the spirit of God are the sons of God."* How clearly will it appear to any but a cavilling and tenacious spirit, that man can be no farther justified, than as he becomes obedient to the spirit's leadings ; for if none can be a son of God but he that is led by the spirit of God, then none can be justified without being led by the spirit of God, because none can be justified but he that is a son of God ; so that the way to justification and sonship is through obedience to the spirit's leadings, that is, manifesting the holy fruits thereof by an innocent life and conversation.

10. "But let every man prove his own work, then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. Be not deceived, for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he reap."† If rejoicing and acceptance with God, or the contrary, are to be reaped

* Rom. viii. 14.

† Gal. vi. 4, 7.

from the work that man soweth, either to the flesh or to the spirit, then is the doctrine of acceptance, and ground of rejoicing, from the works of another, utterly excluded, every man reaping according to what he hath sown, and bearing his own burden.

11. "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."* He that will seriously peruse this chapter, shall doubtless find some to whom this epistle was wrote, of the same spirit with the satisfactionists and imputarians of our time—they fain would have found out a justification from faith in the imputation of another's righteousness; but James, an apostle of the Most High God, who experimentally knew what true faith and justification meant, gave them to understand from Abraham's selfdenying example, that unless their faith in the purity and power of God's grace, had that effectual operation to subdue every beloved lust, wean from every Delilah, and entirely to resign and sacrifice Isaac himself, their faith was a fable, or as a body without a spirit; and as righteousness therefore in one person cannot justify another from unrighteousness; so whoever now pretends to be justified by faith, whilst not led and guided by the spirit into all the ways of truth and works of righteousness, their faith they will find at last a fiction.

* James ii. 21, 24.

12. "Little children, let no man deceive you ; he that doeth righteousness is righteous, as God is righteous, (but) he that committeth sin is of the devil."* From whence it may be very clearly argued, that none can be in a state of justification, from the righteousness performed by another imputed unto them, but as they are actually redeemed from the commission of sin ; for "if he that committeth sin is of the devil," then cannot any be justified completely before God, who is so incompletely redeemed, as yet to be under the captivity of lust, since then the devil's seed or offspring may be justified ; but that is impossible ; it therefore follows, that as he who doeth righteousness is righteous, as God is righteous, so no farther is he like God, or justifiable ; for in whatsoever he derogates from the works of that faith which is held in a pure conscience, he is no longer righteous or justified, but under condemnation as a transgressor, or disobedient person, to the righteous commandment ; and if any would obtain the true state of justification, let them circumspectly observe the holy guidings and instructions of that unction, to which the apostle recommended the ancient churches, that thereby they may be led out of all ungodliness into truth and holiness, so shall they find acceptance with the Lord, who has determined never to justify the wicked.

* John iii. 7, 8

Refuted from right Reason.

1. Because it is impossible for God to justify that which is both opposite and destructive to the purity of his own nature, as this doctrine necessarily obliges him to do, in accepting the wicked, as not such, from the imputation of another's righteousness.

2. Since man was justified before God, whilst in his native innocency, and never condemned till he had erred from that pure state ; he never can be justified, whilst in the frequent commission of that for which the condemnation came ; therefore, to be justified, his redemption must be as entire as his fall.

3. Because sin came not by imputation, but actual transgression ; for God did not condemn his creature for what he did not, but what he did ; therefore must the righteousness be as personal for acceptance, otherwise these two things will necessarily follow ; first, that he may be actually a sinner, and yet not under the curse ; secondly, that the power of the first Adam to death was more prevalent than the power of the second Adam unto life.

4. It is therefore contrary to sound reason, that if actual sinning brought death and condemnation, any thing besides actual obedience unto righteousness should bring life and justification ; for death and life, condemnation and justification being vastly opposite, no man can be actually dead and imputatively alive ; therefore this doctrine, so much contended for, carries *this gross absurdity* with it, that a man may be actually

sinful, yet imputatively righteous ; actually judged and condemned, yet imputatively justified and glorified ; in short, he may be actually damned, and yet imputatively saved ; otherwise it must be acknowledged, that obedience to justification ought to be as personally extensive, as was disobedience to condemnation ; in which real, not imputative sense, those various terms of sanctification, righteousness, resurrection, life, redemption, justification, &c. are most infallibly to be understood.

5. Nor are those words, *impute*, *imputed*, *imputeth*, *imputing*, used in Scripture by way of opposition to that which is actual and inherent, as the assertors of an imputative righteousness do by their doctrine plainly intimate ; but so much the contrary, as that they are never mentioned, but to express men really and personally to be that which is imputed to them, whether as guilty, as remitted, or as righteous. For instance ; “ What man soever of the house of Israel that killeth an ox, and bringeth it not to the door of the tabernacle to offer unto the Lord, blood shall be imputed unto that man,”* or charged upon him as guilty thereof. “ And Shimei said unto the king, let not my lord impute iniquity unto me, for thy servant doth know that I have sinned.”†

6. “ But sin is not imputed where there is no law.”‡ From whence it is apparent that there could be no im-

* Lev. xvii. 3, 4.

† 2 Sam. xix. 18—20.

‡ Rom. v. 13.

putation or charging of guilt upon any, but such as really were guilty. Next, it is used about remission; "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity;"* or as the foregoing words have it, "whose transgression is forgiven." Where the non-imputation doth not argue a nonreality of sin, but the reality of God's pardon; for otherwise there would be nothing to forgive, nor yet a real pardon, but only imputative, which, according to the sense of this doctrine, I call imaginary. Again, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."† Where also nonimputation, being a real discharge for actual trespasses, argues an imputation, by the reason of contraries, to be a real charging of actual guilt. Lastly, it is used in relation to righteousness; "Was not Abraham justified by works, when he offered Isaac? And by works was faith made perfect, and the Scripture was fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness."‡ By which we must not conceive, as do the dark imputarians of this age, that Abraham's offering personally was not a justifying righteousness, but that God was pleased to account it so; since God never accounts a thing that which it is not; nor was there any imputation of another's righteousness to Abraham, but on the contrary, his personal obedience was the ground of that

* Ps. xxxii. 2.

† 2 Cor. v. 19.

‡ James ii. 21—23.

just imputation ; and therefore, that any should be justified from the imputation of another's righteousness, not inherent, or actually possessed by them, is both ridiculous and dangerous—Ridiculous, since it is to say a man is rich to the value of a thousand pounds, whilst he is not really or personally worth a groat, from the imputation of another, who has it all in his possession—Dangerous, because it begets a confident persuasion in many people of their being justified, whilst in captivity to those lusts whose reward is condemnation ; whence came that usual saying amongst many professors of religion, “ that God looks not on them as they are in themselves, but as they are in Christ ;” not considering that none can be in Christ, who are not new creatures, which those cannot be reputed, who have not disrobed themselves of their old garments, but are still inmantled with the corruptions of the old man.

Consequences irreligious and irrational.

1. It makes God guilty of what the Scriptures say is an abomination, to wit, that he justifieth the wicked.
2. It makes him look upon persons as they are not, or with respect, which is unworthy of his most equal nature.
3. He is hereby at peace with the wicked, (if justified whilst sinners,) who said, “ there is no peace to the wicked.”
4. It does not only imply communion with them here, in an imperfect state, but so to all eternity ; “ for

whom he justified, them he also glorified.”* Therefore whom he justified whilst sinners, them he also glorified whilst sinners.

5. It only secures from the wages, not the dominion of sin ; whereby something that is sinful comes to be justified, and that which defileth, to enter God’s kingdom.

6. It renders a man justified and condemned, dead and alive, redeemed and not redeemed, at the same time ; the one by an imputative righteousness, the other a personal unrighteousness.

7. It flatters men, whilst subject to the world’s lusts, with a state of justification, and thereby invalidates the very end of Christ’s appearance, which was to destroy the works of the devil, and take away the sins of the world ; a quite contrary purpose than what the satisfactionists and imputarians of our times have imagined, viz. to satisfy for their sins, and by his imputed righteousness to represent them holy in him, whilst unholy in themselves ; therefore, since it was to take away sin and destroy the devil’s works, which were not in himself, for that Holy One saw no corruption, consequently, in mankind ; what can therefore be concluded more evidently true, than that such in whom sin is not taken away, and the devil’s works undestroyed, are strangers, notwithstanding their conceits, to the very end and purpose of Christ’s manifestation ?

* Rom. viii. 30.

Conclusion, by way of Caution.

Thus, reader, have I led thee through those three so generally applauded doctrines, whose confutation I hope, though thou hast run, thou hast read ; and now I call the righteous God of heaven to bear me record, that I have herein sought nothing below the defence of his unity, mercy, and purity, against the rude and impetuous assaults of tradition, press, and pulpit, from whence I daily hear, what rationally induceth me to believe, a conspiracy is held by counterplots to obstruct the exaltation of truth, and to betray evangelical doctrines to idle traditions ; but God will rebuke the winds, and destruction shall attend the enemies of his anointed. Mistake me not, we never have disowned a Father, Word, and Spirit, which are One, but men's inventions ; for, 1. Their trinity has not so much as a foundation in the Scriptures. 2. Its original was three hundred years after Christianity was in the world. 3. It having cost much blood ; in the council of Sirmium, anno 355, it was decreed, "that thenceforth the controversy should not be remembered, because the Scriptures of God made no mention thereof."* Why, then, should it be mentioned now, with a *maranatha* on all that will not bow to this abstruse opinion ? 4. And it doubtless hath occasioned idolatry ; witness the Popish images of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. 5. It scandalizeth Turks, Jews, and Infidels, and pal-

* Socrat. Schol. An. 355. Conc. Sirm. Cap. xxv. p. 276.

pably obstructs their reception of the Christian doctrine. Nor is there more to be said on the behalf of the other two ; for I can boldly challenge any person to give me one scripture phrase, which does approach the doctrine of satisfaction, much less the name, considering to what degree it is stretched ; not that we do deny, but really confess, that Jesus Christ, in life, doctrine, and death, fulfilled his Father's will, and offered up a most satisfactory sacrifice, but not to pay God, or help him, as otherwise being unable, to save men. And for a justification by an imputative righteousness, whilst not real, it is merely an imagination, not a reality, and therefore rejected ; otherwise confessed and known to be justifying before God, because " there is no abiding in Christ's love without keeping his commandments." I therefore caution thee in love, of whatsoever tribe or family in religion thou mayest be, not longer to deceive thyself by the over fond embraces of human apprehensions for divine mysteries ; but rather be informed that God hath bestowed " a measure of his grace on thee and me, to shew us what is good, that we may obey and do it ;" which if thou diligently wilt observe, thou shalt be led out of all unrighteousness, and in thy obedience shalt thou " receive power to become a son of God ;" in which happy estate God only can be known by men, and they know themselves to be justified before him, whom experimentally to know, by Jesus Christ, is life eternal.

CREEDS

SHOULD BE EXPRESSED IN THE

LANGUAGE OF SCRIPTURE.

FROM WILLIAM PREE'S ADDRESS TO PROTESTANTS.

OPINIONS pass for faith, and are made articles of faith, and are enjoined to be embraced as the bond of communion.

That this is so, let us take the most impartial view we can, and we shall find it to be true, both of the national and many other select societies. That I may be understood in the signification of the word *opinions*, I explain it thus ; *Opinions are all those propositions, or conclusions, made by men doctrines of faith and articles of communion, which either are not expressly laid down in Scripture, or not so evidently deducible from Scripture, as to leave no occasion of doubt of the truth of them in their minds who sincerely and reverently believe the text ; or, lastly, such as have no new or credible revelation to vouch them.*

That this is our case, let the several confessions of faith, published by almost every party in England, be

perused, and you will find such propositions translated into doctrines of faith and articles of communion, as are, first, not only *not expressed* in Scripture, but, perhaps not well deducible *from* Scripture; and if one party may be but believed against another, we can want no evidence to prove what we say. And, in the next place, such as are, though not expressed, yet, it may be, deducible as to the matter of them, are either carried so high, spun so fine, or so disguised by barbarous school terms, that they are rather a bone of contention, than a bond of concord to religious societies. Yet this has been the unhappiness even of this kingdom, after all the light of reformation, which God hath graciously sent amongst us, “Men are to be received or rejected for denying or owning of such propositions.” Wilt thou be a Presbyterian? Embrace and keep the covenant, subscribe the Westminster confession and directory; and so on to the end of every society that grounds communion upon conformity to such propositions and articles of faith.

What a stir have we had in England about the word *Επίσκοπος*. He that says it signifies an higher office than *Πρεσβύτερος*, shall have no part or fellowship with us; on the other hand, they that will debase *Episcopos* to *Presbuteros*, and turn levellers or degraders of episcopal dignity, shall be excommunicated, silenced, punished. Is not this plain fact? Can any deny it, that love truth more than a party? The fire kindled by this contention hath warmed the hands

of violence ; it had been well if men had entertained equal zeal against impiety, and been but half as much enemies to sin, as they have been against one another on such accounts.

If we look a little back, we shall find, that the debate of *freewill* and *unconditional reprobation* filled this kingdom with uncharitableness and division. In the archepiscopacy of Abbot, reputed in himself a good man, whosoever held, "that Christ so died for all men, that all men might be saved, if they would accept the means, and that none were absolutely decreed to eternal reprobation," was reputed a heretic, and excommunicated, as an enemy to the free grace of God ; which, it seems, at that time of day, lay in being *narrow*.

In the reign of archbishop Laud the tide turned ; and those that held an *absolute election* and *reprobation*, without regard had to the good or evil actions of men and asserted that Christ only died for the *elect*, and not for *all*, must be discountenanced, displaced, and pointed at as men out of fashion, though at the same time conscientious, sober, and, at worst, mistaken ; and to be pitied, rather than persecuted ; and informed, not destroyed.

This controversy begat the Synod of Dort ; he that reads the epistles of that judicious man J. Hales, of Eton College, upon the matter and conduct of that assembly, will find cause of being sad at heart ; too many of them talking of religion without the spirit of

it ; men, perhaps, learned in books, but few of the sticklers gave any great testimony of their proficiency in that science, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated. This flame, kindled between Arminius and Episcopius, &c. for the Remonstrants, and Gomarus, Sibrandus, &c. for the Predestinarians, distracted Holland not a little, and had an ill influence upon the affairs of England, at least so far as concerned the church. But the mournfullest part of that history is the ill usage Martinus Crocius, the bishop of Landaff, and others had ; who, though they were acknowledged to be sound in the faith of those things, which generally followed the judgment of Calvin, as to the main points controverted, yet, if at any time they appeared moderate in their behaviour, gentle in their words, and for accommodation in some particulars, with the remonstrants, or free-willers, Gomarus and his followers, not observing the gravity due to the assembly, the rules of debate, and least of all the meekness of christian communion, fell foul of their brethren, reproached their tenderness, and began to fix treachery upon their sober endeavours of accommodation ; as if they intended to execute, as well as maintain, their reprobation, and blow up their friends, rather than not destroy their adversaries.

But if we will rise higher in our inquiry, and view the mischiefs of earlier times, flowing from this practice, the fourth and fifth centuries after Christ will

furnish us with instances enough. We cannot possibly forget the heavy life some men made about the observation of *Easter day*, as if their eternal happiness had been in jeopardy ; for so far were they degenerated from the love and meekness of Christianity, that about keeping of a day, which perhaps was no part, but, to be sure, no essential part, of the christian religion, they fell to pieces ; reproached, reviled, hated, and persecuted one another. "A DAY" was more to them, than "Christ," who was the Lord and end of days ; and "victory over brethren," sweeter than the "Peace and concord of the church," the great command of Jesus, whom they called Lord.

But the remarkable and tragical story of Alexander bishop of Alexandria, and Arius his priest, in their known debate about the "nature and existence of the son of God," with the lamentable consequences thereof, as all writers upon that subject have related, witnesseth to the truth of what I say. The bishop's curiosity, and the strictness of Arius ; the presumption of the one to expound beyond the evidence and simplicity of the text, and the captious humour of the other, that would not abate the bishop anything for his age, or the rank he held in the church, but logically exacted the utmost farthing of the reckoning from his old pastor, first began the fray, which as it became the perplexity of church and state for some ages, so it raged to blood ; and those that had been persecuted like sheep by the hea-

then not long before, turned wolves against each other, and made sport for the infidels, doing their work to their own destruction. Nay, so much more Christian was Themistius the philosopher, that he, in his oration, called *Consul*, commended the emperor Jovianus for his moderation, and advised him to give that liberty of conscience, which professed Christians refused to allow each other; who seemed to think they never did God better service, than in sacrificing one another for religion, even as soon as ever they had escaped the heathen's shambles.

Did we duly reflect upon the unnatural heats, divisions, and excommunications among them, the many councils that were called, the strong and tedious debates held, the translations of sees, the anathemas, the banishments, wars, sackings, fires, and bloodshed, that followed this unnatural division, that sprang from so nice a controversy, one would verily believe no less, than that religion itself had been in the utmost hazard; that Judaism or Paganism were overrunning Christianity; and not that all this stir had been made about an *Iota*. For the whole question was, whether *Homousia*, or *Homoiousia*, should be received for faith? In which the difference is but the single letter *I*; certainly, we must do violence to our understanding, if we can think that these men were followers of that Jesus, that "loved his enemies, and gave his blood for the world," who hated their brethren, and shed one another's blood for *opinions*; the heathen

philosophers never were so barbarous to one another, but maintained a better understanding and behaviour in their differences.

But how easily might all these confusions have been prevented, if their faith about Christ had been delivered in the words of the *Scripture*; since all sides pretend to believe the *text*? And why should any man presume to be wiser, or plainer in matters of faith, than the Holy Ghost? It is strange, that God and Christ should be wanting to express or discover their own mind; or that the words used by the Holy Ghost should have that shortness, ambiguity, or obliquity in them, that *our* frail capacities should be needed to make them more easy, proper, and intelligible. But that we should scarcely deliver any one article of faith in *scripture terms*, and yet make such acts the *rule and bond of christian communion*, is, in my judgment, an offence heinous against God and holy Scripture, and very injurious to christian charity and fellowship. Who can express any man's mind so fully as himself? And shall we allow that liberty to ourselves, and refuse it to God? "The Scriptures came not in old time," said the apostle Peter, "by the will of *man*; but holy men of God spake, as they were moved by the *Holy Ghost*." Who can speak better, or express the mind of the Holy Ghost plainer, than the *Holy Ghost*? The Scripture is the great record of truth, that which all these parties in controversy agree to be *the declared mind and will of God*, and

they unanimously say, it ought to be *believed* and professed as *such*. If this be true, in what language can we so safely and properly declare our belief of those truths, as in the very language of the *Scripture*?

And I cannot see how those persons can be excused in the day of God's judgment, who make men heterodox or heretical, for refusing to subscribe their articles of faith that are not in *scripture terms*, who in the same time offer to declare their belief of God, Christ, spirit, man's lapse or fall, repentance, sanctification, justification, salvation, resurrection, and eternal recompense, in the language of holy Scripture. I must say it is preposterous, and a contradiction, that those who desire to deliver their *faith* of truth, in the *language* of truth, shall not be reputed *true believers*, nor their *faith* admitted. This were to say, that therefore their faith is not to be received, because it is declared in the *language* of that very *truth*, which is the *object* of that *faith*, for which it ought to be received, and which is, on all hands, concluded to be our duty to believe. It seems then, we must not express our belief of God in *his* words but our *own*; nor is the Scripture a creed plain or proper enough to declare a true believer, or an orthodox Christian, without our glosses.

Are not things come to a sad pass, that to refuse any other terms than those the Holy Ghost has given us, and which are confessed to be the "rule or form of sound words," is to expose a man to the censure

of being unsound in the faith, and unfit for christian communion? Will nothing do but *man's comment* instead of *God's text*? *His consequences and conclusions*, in the room of *sacred revelation*? I cannot see how any man can be obliged to *receive*, or *believe* revealed truths in any *other* language than that of the revelation *itself*; especially if those that vary the expression have not the same spirit to lead them in doing so, or that it appears not to me that they have the guidance of that holy spirit. If the Holy Ghost had left *doubts* in Scripture, which is yet irreverent to believe, I see not how *men* can resolve them; it is the *work* of that *spirit*. And since men are so apt to err, doubts are better left in *Scripture*, than made or left by *us*. But it is to cross that order of prudence and wisdom among men, who choose to conform their *expressions* to the thing they *believe*. If an honest man hath related a *story* to me, of something he hath seen, and I am to declare my *faith* about it, if I believe the *fact*, I will choose to deliver it in the *terms* of the *relator*, as being nearest to the truth.

Suppose a father, dying, makes his *last will and testament*, and as he thinks so plain, that there can be no mistake made by the *executors*, but what is wilful; if they, instead of proving this will and acting according to the plainness of it, turn *commentators*, make more difficulties than they find, and perplex the whole matter to the children and legatees, and send them to the *law* for right; will we not esteem such

executors *ill* men, and justify those persons concerned in their *refusal* of their *paraphrase*? “God hath, at sundry times, and in diverse manners,” by his prophets, his beloved Son, and his Apostles,* delivered to the world a *declaration* of his blessed *will*; but some have claimed and taken to themselves the *heaping, explanation, and use* of it, so as those that choose to be concluded by the *letter and text* of *Christ’s testament*, in its most *important* points, expose themselves to great prejudice for so doing; for they are excommunicated from all other share in it, than the punishment of the breakers of it; which is part of *their* anathema, who, of all others, are most guilty of *adding, or diminishing*, by undertaking to determine, for others as well as themselves, the *mind and intention* of the Holy Ghost in it.

But if it be true, as true it is, that few have writ of the divine authority of Scripture, who do not affirm that the very penmen of it were not only inspired by the Holy Ghost, but so extraordinarily acted by him, as that they were wholly asleep to their own will, desires or affections, like people taken out of themselves, and purely passive, as “clay in the hands of the potter,” to the *revelation, will, and motion* of the *spirit*; and for this end, that nothing delivered by them might have the least possibility of mistake, error, or imperfection, but be a “complete declaration of the

* Heb. i. 1.

will of God to men," I cannot see which way such men excuse themselves from great presumption, that will, notwithstanding, have the *wording of creeds of communion*, and reject that declaration of faith as insufficient, which is delivered in the very terms of the Holy Ghost ; and deny those persons to be members of Christ's church, that in conscience refuse to subscribe any other draught than that the Lord has given them.

Two things oppose themselves to this practice ; the glory of God, and the honour of the Scripture ; in that it naturally draws people from the regard due to God and the Scripture, and begets too much respect for men and their tradition. This was the difficulty Christ met with, and complained of, in his time ; they had set up so many rabbies to teach them religion, that the Lord of the true religion could hardly find place amongst them. And what did they do ? " They taught for doctrines the traditions of men ;" they gave their own and their predecessors' apprehensions, constructions, and paraphrases upon Scripture, for the mind and will of God, the rule of the people's faith. They were near at this pass in the church of Corinth, when they cried out, " I am for Paul, I am for Apollos, and I am for Cephas," though they had not the same temptation.

And that which followed then, ever will follow in the like case, and that is, distraction ; which is the contrary to the second thing that opposeth itself to

this practice, and that is the concord of Christians. For the sake of peace consider it; *Lo here, and lo there, always followed; one of this mind, and another of that; as many sects, as great men to make and head them.* This was the case of the Jews; and yet I do not hear that they devoured one another about their opinions and commentaries upon Scripture; but the Christians have done both; divided and persecuted too. First, they have divided, and that mostly upon the score of opinions about religion. They have not been contented with the expressions of the *Holy Ghost*; they liked their *own* better. And when *they* were set up, in the room of Scripture, and in the name of Scripture, submission was required, upon pain of worldly punishments. This dissatisfied curiosity, this unwarrantable,—what shall I say? This wanton search, has cost christendom dear, and poor England dearest of any part of it.

All this while, the head is set at work, not the heart; and that which Christ most insisted upon, is least concerned in this sort of faith and Christianity; and that is, “keeping his commandments.” For it is opinion, not obedience; notion, and not regeneration, that such men pursue. This kind of religion leaveth them as bad as it findeth them, and worse; for they have something more to be proud of. Here is a *creed*, indeed, but of what? The *conclusions of men*! and what to do? To prove they believe in Christ, who, it seems, never made them. It had been

happy for the world, that there had been no other *creeds*, than what he and his apostles gave and left; and it is not the least argument against their being needful to christian communion, *that Christ and his Apostles did not think so, who were not wanting to declare the whole counsel of God to the church.*

To conclude ; if you desire peace, love truth, seek piety, and hate hypocrisy, lay by all those things called *articles of faith*, and *canons of the church*, that are not to be found in *express terms* in *Scripture*, or so plainly authorised *by Scripture*, as may, with ease, be discerned by every honest and conscientious person. And in the room of those numerous and disputed opinions, made the bond of external communion, let some *plain, general, and necessary truths be laid down in Scripture terms, and let them be few.*



THE
INNOCENCY OF ERROR

ASSERTED AND VINDICATED,

BY DR SYKES.

ARTHUR ASHLEY SYKES.

DR SYKES was a clergyman of the church of England, and held for many years a very high rank as a teacher, a scholar, and a writer. He was born in London about the year 1684, and was educated first at St Paul's school, and afterwards at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. He took his degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1704, and applied himself to the study of divinity. His first ecclesiastical preferment was a curacy in Kent, obtained through the favour of Archbishop Tennison. This was in the year 1712. He remained in this station two years, when he was transferred to a rectory in Cambridgeshire, where he soon after published the tract entitled the *Innocency of Error asserted and vindicated*. He had already engaged in a controversy with Mr Brett to refute the notion, that such persons only as had been episcopally ordained could administer christian baptism. Of the evidence on the Innocency of Error, Dr Disney, in his life of the author, speaks as follows.

“Mr Sykes was then in the thirty first year of his age, and having diligently studied the Scriptures, ecclesiastical history, and all useful knowledge, which

applied to the forming just conceptions of the word and will of God, and of the invaluable and undeniable rights of men and Christians, there are no marks of a premature blossom unseasonably put forth, and likely to be blighted, ere it was set to bear fruit. But, on the contrary, we read a work which would have reflected honour on great abilities and learning, well corrected and digested by matured age.

“The subject of this publication was happily chosen, and the tract forms an excellent vindication of its author, and of the liberty he took in all his future writings; affording at the same time incontestible proof that he had fully satisfied himself of the duty of inquiry in its fullest extent, and in all its consequences, before he proceeded in the defence or attack of particular doctrines or opinions.*”

This tract met with a most favourable reception, and passed through several editions. It was attacked, however, from different quarters, and especially by Dr Potter, bishop of Oxford. The author defended his performance against every charge, and in reply to the bishop of Oxford he wrote an elaborate vindication.†

Dr Sykes received several preferments in the church, but preached for the most part at King’s

* *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Arthur Ashley Sykes*, D. D. By John Disney, D. D. London. 1785. p. 10.

† The original title of the tract was the *Innocency of Error asserted and vindicated*; but in the sixth edition, which was printed after the author’s death, the word *Involuntary* is inserted before *Error*, as more clearly indicating the nature of the work.

street chapel in Westminster. He wrote on religious and political topics, and in the account of his life above referred to, there are contained at full length the titles of no less than *sixty three* separate works, published by him at different times. He took the side of Hoadly in the Bangorian controversy, and was through his whole life a firm friend of christian liberty, the rights of conscience, and unshackled inquiry. His *Essay on Sacrifices*, and his *Scripture Doctrine of Redemption*, are among the best treatises, which have been written on these subjects. His inquiries are conducted on broad and liberal principles. The Scriptures he takes invariably for his guide, and follows boldly where they lead him, without regard to the fancies of men, or the mandates of fallible human tribunals. "His sentiments respecting the person of Jesus Christ," says his biographer, "are well known to have agreed with those of Dr Clarke; and one of his tracts was expressly written in defence of his *Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity*." But all his discussions and controversies were carried on in an excellent temper, and in the spirit of the religion which he professed, and which he did so much to adorn in his life, and to defend and illustrate by his writings. He died on the twenty third of November, 1756, in the seventy third year of his age.

PREFACE

TO THE FOURTH EDITION.

THE *Innocency of Error* had not long been published, before *Remarks* upon it came out, wrote in a very *angry* manner ; some notice was taken of these in a *Preface* to the second edition. The same author, and in the same manner, wrote a defence of his *Remarks* ; and since that time others have likewise animadverted upon this little treatise, who laying hold of some incidental passages or inaccuracies, would seem to have confuted the book itself.

The great end I proposed in writing it was to show how innocent a thing it is to be mistaken in any matter, where industry, and honesty, and diligence, had been applied to find out truth ; and that God would never punish a man for his errors, if he had been sincere in his searches after the divine will. This point I have not seen confuted ; nay, I think that every one of the gentlemen who have been at the pains of endeavouring to refute this tract, have expressly, or by necessary consequence, owned it, how willing soever they may at the same time seem to be to deny it.

I had no other views in writing this treatise at first, nor have I now in correcting the inaccuracies of the former editions, but to follow truth in what I judge to be a matter of importance. From my first beginning to think, I have always deemed it not only an injury to persons, but an enmity to truth, to affix odious names and characters to such as honestly pursue truth, if they happen to mistake; and I have never yet been able to perceive any harm or mischief to society, from a liberty of inquiring, or of publishing sentiments, which are of consequence to mankind.

When therefore it is suggested, as it has been, that I should in some other *times* have met with public disgrace and discountenance, and even censures on account of this treatise, I cannot forbear asking, whether it would have been on account of the *principles* in it, from which I have argued, or on account of the *consequences*, or on account of some *incidental inaccuracies*? The first, every one that has wrote against me has granted; the second, not any one can deny; and as to the third, I shall always be ready to plead for my excuse;

Homo sum, humani a me nil alienum puto.

I should ask too, what were those times? Were they the times of darkness and ignorance? Or were they the times of tyranny, and oppression, and cruelty? Were they times when truth might dare to appear; or when it could rear up its dejected face, and be heard in the midst of antichristian violence?

But be those times what they will, I own that I rejoice, and every man of reason will rejoice with me, that the times we live in are times when private judgment is allowed ; when men may search after truth free from personal dangers ; when truth and not the authority of men is made the test of opinions ; and when the greatest men in power publicly disown all intention, and think it a disgrace to be charged with a design to put a stop to true liberty.

I have but one thing further to add ; that in this edition I have taken the liberty to correct, not only what I had observed to have misled some into notions which I never designed, but likewise many passages which have not, that I know of, been found fault with by others. I have added, altered, omitted, as I thought proper, very many places, and now submit it to the judgment of every reader that loves truth.

THE
INNOCENCY
OF
INVOLUNTARY ERROR
ASSERTED AND VINDICATED.

IN A LETTER TO A FRIEND.

SIR,

You expressed the other day a great deal of concern, not without some mixture of indignation, that I should assert and vindicate a position, which you thought monstrous and detestable, viz. *That no heresy is so destructive of religion as a wicked life; no schism so damnable as a course of sin.* I then urged some arguments to you, which you owned contained in them a shew at least of reason, and an air of probability; but yet you were apprehensive, that I might have used some art or disguise in my words, which then you could not see through so clearly; and therefore you desired me to lay my reasons together, and give you an opportunity of weighing them distinctly

yourself. I here send them to you ; expecting
 ly and desiring a sincere love of truth, and a readi-
 ness to embrace her however negligently or inartifi-
 cally dressed up ; assuring you from one who knew
 the worth of *Truth* and *Wisdom*, that *she is more pre-
 cious than rubies, and all the things that thou canst
 desire are not to be compared to her.*

To evince the truth of the assertion, first in gene-
 ral let the words be only considered, and the thing
 will be evident. Religion consists in an habitual dis-
 position of the mind to perform our duties from a be-
 lief in God, and a desire to make ourselves acceptable
 to him. Now it is plain, that a course of sin is direct-
 ly contrary to such a temper ; nay, it is a contradic-
 tion, to pretend to a disposition of mind to please
 God, and yet to act generally so as will displease him,
 that is, to lead a wicked life, or to live in a course of

Now if *heresy* or *schism* be not a contradiction
 in habitual disposition of mind to please God, then
 we had good ground to assert and vindicate the position
 before laid down. By *heresy* is meant usually an
 error in *fundamentals*. Put the case now of any
 error, Arianism for instance, which some pretend is
 living, or Socinianism, or any other that you please.
 It is very possible for men to be persuaded of the
 truth of any one of those opinions, though it be
 termed *heretical*, consistent with a hearty desire to
 perform their duties, and to please God. For where,
 I say, is the inconsistency ? They *believe* in God,

and do their duties from a sense of him, and a desire to make themselves acceptable to him ; you yourself cannot deny but that they who do thus are more moral men than those who live in a *course of sin*. They think themselves obliged to act to the best of their knowledge, according to the rules which God has laid down ; which, if one may judge by the sinner's practice, he doth not. They with diligence and industry search and endeavour to find out the will of God, and steadily keep all those laws which they understand the purport of, which a wicked liver never strives to do.

This you think may be allowed. *But the Arian or Socinian pays not the honour, or the worship, which God has prescribed. And since no religion can be acceptable, which is contrary to the will of God, they that are guilty of such crimes shall suffer.*

You know my opinion so well on these points, that I need not tell you, I neither vindicate nor approve of the one or the other. But yet, supposing that the Arian, or Socinian, does not pay the worship which is by God commanded, yet each of them observes the will of God to the best of his knowledge ; whereas the sinner does not do this. The reputed heretic gives not so complete a worship as is supposed to be prescribed ; but then he fails through mere ignorance, in a point which is attended with such difficulties as are to him insuperable ; whereas the sinner fails in plain duties, and acts contrary to his knowledge. And so much at least as it is better to pay all that

one knows, or can learn to be due to a creditor, than to refuse what one knows to be due. so much is that which is called heresy better than sin.

The same answer will justify the other part of the assertion of schism.

Thus much may suffice in general as to the assertion; but because I would willingly go to the bottom of this question, and treat it with as much care as I can; I will endeavour to root up the foundation of your prejudices, by representing to you the *innocency of error*.

Error is the assent of the mind to a proposition as true, which is not so. If this extends no farther than the mind, it is what I call *simple error*. If a man proceeds upon this false bottom to regulate his practice, such error is then called a *practical error*. How far errors fall under the cognisance of man, or of a much higher tribunal, that of God, will appear from the ensuing discourse. In order to which I shall endeavour to show beyond dispute, that no errors, if involuntary, are or can be punishable.

FIRST. In all perceptions the mind is wholly *passive*; and the perceptions of things being in numberless instances quite different from what things are really in themselves, unless we are capable of bringing together and comparing a great many intermediate ideas to rectify these mistakes, we must *necessarily* fall into abundance of *errors*. Try to persuade a countryman that the sun is a great many times bigger

than the earth, or that it is a great many thousand miles distant from us, and he will think you attempt only to impose upon him, and endeavour to persuade him out of his senses. In these and ten thousand such like cases, men are as *necessarily* under errors, as they are *necessary* in their perceptions, and they cannot help continuing in this sort of mistakes, for want of proper means to rectify them; and therefore in these cases they are no more to blame for not removing them, than a stone is to blame for moving when it is impelled.

SECONDLY. Error always consisting in a mistake of the judgment, it must be in its own nature involuntary; and if involuntary error be punishable, then wherever there is error there is guilt, and consequently *all men* must be guilty before God on that account. For where is the man that doth not entertain some errors, either concerning things which really do exist, or in deductions which he draws from them? Who is there that is so well versed in nature, as to be master of all her mazes, and certain that he knows, I say, *knows* all her secrets? Or who is there that ever repented or asked God's pardon for mistakes of this nature? And yet if errors be criminal, it is certain that all crimes unrepented of are damnable.

But it is allowed that a man may be mistaken in many things of this nature, without any crime or fault, But where God has concerned himself in the discovery of anything, there it is thought to be criminal to *err, or to be ignorant.*

This, though it may seem to carry a profound respect for the revelation of God, yet it is plainly insufficient for the purpose for which it is brought. For, *First*, is any man obliged to know, or understand in the meaning which God intended, *every* thing that is revealed? Is any man obliged to have a distinct knowledge of every passage of the Scriptures, which unless he can attain to, he must necessarily be damned? Let him that thinks so set about the explication of the Apocalypse, or the old prophets, and try if he is capable himself of doing what he thinks is required of others under pain of damnation. *Secondly*, it is impossible not to believe what God has thought fit to reveal, supposing one knows that God has revealed it. But surely a man that has sufficient ground to believe that God has declared his mind, yet may not have a clear and distinct understanding of everything contained in the Revelation. Suppose a man should not understand who, or what is meant by the *White Horse* in the Revelations, or what is the meaning of *being baptised for the dead*, or of many other such like difficult passages; yet whilst he owns that God is the author of these passages, and is ready to believe them in the best manner he can get an understanding of them, where can be his crime? Why is it not rational to conclude, that if God had designed upon pain of damnation that every one should have determinate and adequate ideas belonging to those sounds, he would have so expressed himself as that no one

should mistake his meaning? Therefore, *Thirdly*, if it is always criminal to err in the meaning of a passage of Scripture, the crime will not rest where we are apt to fix it, but will ascend to a place where we dare not think of guilt, even to God himself, who has delivered his will in terms that are so hard to be understood. *Fourthly*, the distinction here made use of between *errors in things revealed*, and *errors in other matters*, proves directly, that *error as error* is not *criminal*. For it is as much an error to believe heat in the fire, as to mistake any *theological truth*. But I proceed.

THIRDLY. If *involuntary error* be punishable by God; then it is the greatest cruelty, injustice, and tyranny imaginable in him, to make such creatures as cannot but err in many cases, and yet to punish them for erring. Our knowledge is but of very narrow extent, and confined to a very few things; the rest must be resolved into opinion; and as there are innumerable degrees of assent, from assurance and confidence, down to distrust and disbelief, there may be as many possibilities of errors. As this then is the make and frame of our constitutions, it would be cruel and unjust in God to punish us for what we cannot help; or to treat us as breakers of his laws, when we only want *light*, which the *Father of Light* alone can give.

FOURTHLY. If *involuntary errors* are punishable by God, it is not a few that are called or represented as *heretics*; nor a few *dissenters* in a nation, (though

it is only these *more openly* are struck at by the abettors of such unchristian tenets,) no, nor ten thousand times ten thousand, that must perish everlastingly; but the flames of hell will reach to almost, if not quite to all the christian world. Let us look into the several communities of Christians, and by an impartial view of their *professed* tenets, see how by the lump whole nations must be damned, if mere *errors* are damnable! The Greek church denies the *procession of the Holy Ghost* from the *Son*; the Melchites do the same; so do the Georgians and Muscovites; the Nestorians maintain the heresy of Nestorius, averring *two persons* as well as two natures in our Saviour; the Christians of St Thomas do the same; the Jacobites are Eutychians; the Egyptians think it their duty to *circumcise*, and to give the sacrament of the Lord's supper to infants; the Abassines circumcise; the Armenians believe as the Greeks about the *procession of the Holy Ghost*, and receive infants to the communion; the Maronites do the same, and are Monothelites, or lately were so, till they reconciled themselves to the Romish church, which I doubt has but little lessened their errors; the Roman Catholics are almost as full of errors as they have practices; their idolatry and superstitions are as evident as their profession of transubstantiation. If we look upon protestantism, we cannot but own all the *dissenters* from the *church of England* to be erroneous. Those of Geneva, France, and Holland think episcopacy

unnecessary, and have varied from that form of government which Christ and his Apostles instituted; Scotland is in the same unhappy condition; the Lutherans *consubstantiate*; in a word, all are in error, but *our happy church*; thrice happy, if we can but keep in the same state we are in! Heaven will be replenished with us alone; and the compliment formerly paid by the Pope to our nation, that *Angli* are *quasi Angeli*, will be proper only when applied to the members of our communion!

I need not speak a word about the heathens, or the Mahometans, which make up, if we believe Mr Breerwood's computation, twenty five parts of thirty of the world. Of the remaining five, all but our little *dust upon the balance*, our *drop in the sea*, are to go into everlasting punishment, *into a place where the fire is not quenched, and the worm never dies!* In short, heaven is made only for a part of England, and a much less part too than is perhaps imagined. For the men who would be in charity with all other Christians, who think they all have a right to judge for themselves, and that no man hath a dominion over the conscience of another; that all men have a right to toleration as much as they have to property, these (unhappy men, worthy of better fate!) these bad churchmen must go ———— their enemies will tell them whither.

You will be ready to evade the force of this argument, by retorting it in some such manner as this;

that by parity of reason it may be said, that sin therefore is not damnable, because all mankind are sinners. For where is the difference in these arguments? If damnation be the consequence of sin, it will follow, that all mankind being sinners, all mankind must be damned; and, damnation being put as the consequence of error, all mankind being under errors, all mankind must be damned. Where is the difference, you will perhaps ask, of these arguments, that the one is a good, the other is a bad one? But,

To this the answer is so easy, that I shall not insist on it farther than to observe, that all sin is voluntary, and unrepented of is damnable; but the error here spoken of is involuntary, and cannot be repented of, because taken to be truth. Therefore we see all the world dies in errors of some sort or other, never asking pardon of, or for them. But sin is always repented of by every sober, good Christian, whether he be a Grecian, Roman Catholic, or Protestant; which shews that all the world agrees in a great and material difference in the cases. But this makes

A FIFTH argument, why involuntary error cannot be punishable; because we cannot repent of such error, since we believe it to be true. I do not say a man cannot retract an error, when he discovers it to be such, which is some sort of repentance, if you think fit to call it so; but a man can have no sting of conscience, no remorse, no selfcondemning notions, for being under a mistake. Error being a mistake of the

judgment, it must direct and guide our actions as much as truth itself. Now the sway of truth is, by directing our actions according to our judgment; and if that be misinformed, or be misguided, the effect must be the same as of truth, as flowing from the same principle. Now as it is a contradiction to be fully persuaded of any point, and to repent of it at the same time, it will follow, that because the error is unknown, it therefore cannot be repented of. And who is there in ten thousand, or in a great many times that number, that doth not die in abundance of errors about one thing or other, which yet he takes to be so many real truths? Who is there that strives to make his peace with God, for such things, which he has endeavoured to free himself from, but yet continues in them, not through any fault of his own? Sin being voluntary, and our own act, we repent of it, and ask God's pardon for it. But error in judgment, when we do our endeavours sincerely to attain truth, is not an action; in that we are passive, and consequently it is not our own deed, nor imputable to us, more than other things, which we can neither prevent their happening, nor remedy after they have happened.

Every man may therefore say, what the incomparable Mr Chillingworth says, "If men suffer themselves neither to be betrayed into their errors, nor kept in them by any sin of their will; if they do their best endeavours to free themselves from all errors, and yet fail of it through human frailty; so well am I per-

suaded of the goodness of God, that if in me alone should meet a confluence of all such errors of all the protestants of the world, that were thus qualified, I should not be so much afraid of them all, as I should be to ask pardon for them. For, to ask pardon for simple and purely involuntary errors, is tacitly to imply that God is angry with us for them ; and that were to impute to him the tyranny of requiring *brick* where he gives no *straw*, of expecting to *gather where he strewed not, to reap where he sowed not* ; of being offended with us, for doing what he knows we cannot do."

For these reasons it is that I conclude, that involuntary error cannot be punishable ; and such must be reckoned not only errors that have been critically examined by every particular person, but such as have been searched by the rule of common human prudence and discretion. Those must not always be reckoned voluntary, which arise from the common springs of error, though these are too often reckoned such, viz. authority, preconceived hypotheses ; or even predominant passions themselves ; much less are those to be reckoned guilty of voluntary errors, who want either abilities or opportunities to search after truth. Such only are voluntary as can be avoided by that care and application of mind, which the importance of the subject requires ; or such as we embrace or continue in through negligence, sloth, and such like causes.

You will not, I know, admit it for truth, without good proof, that errors, springing from the causes just now mentioned, are not criminal. I shall therefore consider them distinctly, and see if there be any sin or evil in errors so occasioned ; and if there be, in what that sin consists.

First, then, that error is not always criminal, or punishable, which springs from authority. The bulk of mankind, it is certain, have not abilities or time sufficient to inquire after abstruse truths, and therefore must either have no notions at all, or must take up with the notions of others. Some are guided by, and see entirely with the eyes of such whom they judge to be their friends. Others there are who think nothing true but what is to be found among the ancients, and think it an infallible note, that Aristotle in philosophic matters, some or other of the Fathers in religious ones, have said it. Some resign their minds to the church blindly, and without examination ; others take up with the current opinions, and imagine error could never spread itself so wide, and captivate such and such great persons. In short, these are all, to their respective guides, just what Sancho was to Don Quixote ; they are fully persuaded of enchantments, giants, and adventures, which their masters dream of ; they bring themselves into frequent difficulties to justify them ; and then expect no less than islands or earldoms as the rewards of their follies.

To shew you that the errors of such are not always criminal, let it be considered, that authority is allowed

to be not only a means of information, but is a ground of persuasion too in several cases. For instance ; in assenting to a divine revelation, the authority of God is a sufficient ground of our belief, because no truth is more certain, no maxim is more evident than this, that the God of truth cannot, will not, lie. His authority is grounded on his veracity, and integrity, and ability ; and in depending upon him we cannot err. But then in other cases, where only men are concerned, their authority is proportionable to their veracity, integrity, and powers. If any one therefore depends upon these, he may frequently be deceived. And if he be, it is plain that the error is not for want of will to know the truth, but want of power to attain it. The canal through which it was to pass is stopped, and therefore it is impossible to get at it. There are numberless persons who cannot read, and these must necessarily depend on others for information in their religion. If these are under errors, and their errors are criminal, the crime can fall on those only from whom they receive instruction. Prudence and discretion will sometimes oblige us to depend on the authority of others, where possibly they, and consequently we, may be mistaken. To punish us for such errors, would be the same as to require us to act imprudently and indiscreetly ; which a God of infinite wisdom cannot expect from us ; nor will he be so rigid a taskmaster as to require brick without straw from us. Besides, were all errors criminal, which spring from authority,

it is certain that a means of information, and a ground of persuasion, would be rendered not only dangerous, but inconsistent with prudence and discretion. For it would be imprudent to hazard damnation upon crediting any body ; and yet it is impossible to withhold assent, when there seems to us to be greater degrees of probability for what is said, than against it. If only some errors which spring from this fountain are criminal, then it is plain that the faultiness of them must be caused by something else besides authority, viz. from negligence or carelessness, or some such circumstance of error.

Secondly ; nor is that error always criminal, which proceeds from preconceived hypotheses, or positions, which being false, are admitted for true. Such preconceptions being erroneous, it is in vain to expect anything from them but errors ; and if the hypotheses are not criminal, that which flows from them directly cannot be so. He that searches after truth ought as critically as he can to examine the principles he goes upon, and must take great care that every step is fairly deduced, or else he will quickly find that it is not the light of truth, but an *ignis fatuus*, which he pursues. But yet how few, if any, are guarded against preconceptions. It is often nothing but inadvertency, when any one takes up with prepossessions ; but then, as sure as inadvertency is very consistent with sincerity, so sure it is that a God of goodness and justice cannot punish them when joined together. Some-

times the prepossession is so strong that no arguments will make any impression upon the mind ; and it is very possible for a man to imagine, that he sees a connexion between two propositions, when there really is none ; as on the contrary, not to perceive it where there is. Ideas, which have been long combined together, and which we have constantly associated in our minds, are found to be sometimes inseparable by all our care. When this is the case, we ought not to deem it obstinacy, or froward waywardness, if we are not able to convince a man of some mistake he labours under ; but we should leave it to time, and further care to cure him of his errors. The instances are very numerous of learned men, who never could be convinced of certain mistakes.

The idea of God proves his existence, is a position so far from true, that nothing seems to me a plainer paralogism ; and yet how many are there who contend for its evidence, as being one of the shortest and most direct conclusions imaginable ? Should an atheist be convinced of the being of a God, from that argument, would any one affirm that he would be liable to punishment for his error ? Suppose any one seduced by the ambiguity of the word God, in the sacred writings, should maintain an absolute coequality of the persons of the ever blessed Trinity ; this would be, if I mistake not, direct Tritheism ; or suppose any one should assert the words *one God*, speaking of the three persons of the Trinity, to signify one individual

essence or substance under different personal characters ; this would be the error of Sabellius. Suppose, I say, one early educated in, and strongly prepossessed in favour of either of these notions, should maintain them, or believe them to be true, where would be the dishonesty, or insincerity of this ? He may notwithstanding have a cordial love for God, and his Christ ; he may be strictly religious, and live temperately, soberly, and godly ; and if these are the things which alone are required by God in order to a Christian's salvation, why should we imagine that he will damn us for our notions, when it is so often out of our power whether we will believe them or not ? In short, an hypothesis may be received as true, which may be false ; or as false, which may be true ; without any wilfulness, insincerity, or resolution to maintain it, right or wrong. One may not see the error for want of abilities, or be so bewildered in the intricate ways that lead to truth, as after a tiresome search to sit down with error, and embrace a shadow instead of a substance. These, and such like involuntary cases, we should not confound with voluntary practices ; or imagine that if the one be criminal, the other must imply a share of guilt.

The crime in the present case, be it more or less, is wholly in negligence, or want of that application which ought to have been employed, and not in the error itself, which was consequent upon education, or early prejudice.

Thirdly; in cases where there is want of abilities to know an error, or want of opportunity, I need not prove that truth is out of our power to come at it, and consequently that we are necessarily under error, and therefore not liable to punishment. I will add,

Fourthly; that even predominant passions hindering us in the search after truth, do not always render errors punishable. Truth it is certain is often no more in our power than perception is; nor can we help assenting to what we think has the best, and clearest, and most proofs. We cannot assent to any truth, but such as we judge to be so, according to the evidences we have. If any passion therefore predominates, and hurries us away before we can reflect, we cannot but err; and then it is our misfortune, it is our frailty, it is our infirmity, and we are unhappy in it; but it is not our fault or crime; we become the objects of goodness, not of anger, or severity. Here would I recommend to every man a careful examination of his actions; and if he finds them tending to the hurt of others, to suspect some latent negligence, or carelessness in himself; for passions which we can control will not excuse us in injurious actions. Reason and religion were given us in order to regulate our wills, and to make us happy here, by promoting love and charity, and universal benevolence. But if we suffer, through our own faults, our passions to take fire, and break in upon these duties, we become responsible to the great judge of all our actions.

You will say, perhaps, that it is needless to guard against evil actions, since they flowing necessarily from the judgment, must be as innocent as the judgment is.

I readily allow, that all such actions as necessarily follow from an involuntary error, must be as innocent as the error is. But in general this is not the case of human actions. The duties of justice and charity to our neighbours, of temperance to ourselves, and piety to God, are so express and plain, that it is hard not to be convinced of the common obligation, which all are under to them. They are so evident, that at any time any man is so disposed as to think of good, and good evil, he cannot but suspect a fault in himself and his own mind, just as when we are unable to perceive light at noonday, we may justly conclude that the organs of sight are indisposed. Our actions therefore should always be considered, and always be guarded carefully ; and if they tend towards how to barbarity, or injustice, or what usually appears as evil, it will be a good ground for suspicion, and a more careful examination of such principles as direct them. But to proceed.

You will be apt to ask here, if any sort of error can be criminal ? Will a man be justified before God, if he is guilty of heresy, because, forsooth, he is passionate or because he follows a great many who have gone before him in the same track, or because he takes up with whimsical notions, which are acknowledged fal-

hoods? Is not this to make a chaos and confusion amongst mankind? Is there no difference between Erroneous persons and others? Is there none between Orthodoxy and heresy? Is it all one, if a man be an Arian, Socinian, a Macedonian, or let him have what notions he pleases, provided they are involuntary?

I shall turn the edge of this popular clamour, for I cannot allow it the name of an argument, in a few words. As,

First; all voluntary errors (and I have told you what are voluntary) are criminal, because they are contempts of God, who has given us proper means to search after truth. It is the improvement of our souls we are as much as we can to mind; and wilfully to refuse and neglect that, is to act contrary to the purpose of God, in vesting us with such faculties. But what a difference is there between this conduct and our falling into errors through infirmity, or by necessity? Let voluntary errors therefore be as criminal as you please, but then you must remember to lay them to the charge of only such as are guilty of them, and you must be very sure who are such; for be assured that it is not your bare charge will make them so.

Secondly; an heretic will not be justified because he is passionate, or because he follows a multitude, or has great authorities for his errors, but because his errors are involuntary. He doth his best to rid himself of that slavery, which ties down his mind to error, but finds himself unable to gain the mastery. He can

say as St Paul does, Rom. vii. 18. *To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I know not.* Wherever it can be shown that heresy or schism is a known voluntary act, there to be sure it is criminal, and no doubt that God justly may and will take cognisance of it. But when it is involuntary, and arises from a man's mistaking the truth, schism or heresy is so far from being damnable, that I cannot but think it is highly commendable, because it evidences honesty, sincerity, love of God, and of truth, and regards not the praise of men. Such men will certainly meet with favour at the last day from a God of goodness, how great soever their errors may be, because they embraced them, and pursued them, as believing them to be his will, and used their best care to find out the truth. It is not the mere following multitudes, that excuses men; but it is the doing their best to know the will of God, which takes off the imputation of sin and guilt. Therefore,

Thirdly; a man may be branded with the ignominious characters of an Arian, Sabellian, or what you please; but if he be honest and sincere, and hath done his best to rid himself of those notions, and yet he cannot but think them true, that is, agreeable to revelation and reason, I can see no reason but that one heaven may receive him, as well as it may the most orthodox. But this will still appear more clear, if we consider that,

All persons under the misfortune of error are either,

First ; such as err involuntarily in purely speculative matters. Or,

Secondly ; such whose involuntary errors have no necessary connexion with practice, but yet they may accidentally have an influence upon it. Or,

Thirdly ; such whose involuntary errors have a necessary connexion with practice, but they do not see it. Or,

Lastly ; such as err voluntarily, and practice according to their errors.

First, such as err in purely speculative matters, (I speak of persons who have endeavoured to know the truth, but cannot attain unto it,) such, I say, are as free from crime or fault, as it is possible for such as are orthodox in those points to be. For he that with sincerity searches after truth, is under a necessity of assenting to such propositions as seem to him to have the greatest degree of probability on their sides. It is out of our powers not to think that truest, for which the arguments appear to us to be strongest ; and it is our duty to let evidence, or the greatest degree of probability prevail, and to give a ready ear to that. In the various speculations concerning the unity of the Trinity, it is granted by all that they are in the dark, as to many particulars ; and that in those cases, where God has not revealed his mind, it is ridiculous and absurd for man to presume positively to determine. It is plain too, that very honest, and very sincere, and very pious men, have erred, or are suspected to have erred,

in their notions upon this point ; from whence it is plain that revelation has not very clearly and distinctly laid down the things which have been so much canvassed.

Now if it be a good principle, (and what protestant is there that ever called it in question?) that the Scriptures are clear in all fundamental points, then it follows, that if this be not clearly laid down, it cannot be a fundamental point how the Three are One. The errors which arise about that, either arise from want of sufficient revelation, which men endeavour to supply by, or to reconcile to reason, that other light which God has kindled in every man's breast in order to enlighten his ways, or else from some violent prejudice or other, which good men are not able to surmount. Now he that studies sincerely this or any other point, with design to honour his great Creator, by searching and examining what he has revealed, by endeavouring to find out what he has discovered ; in a word, he that doth his best to know his master's will, and to find out his meaning, and yet errs ; to dare to say that such a man sins, and shall be punished for it hereafter, is little less than blasphemy. For it is a consequential denial of God's goodness and justice, to affirm him resolved to punish us for involuntary errors, or for not knowing what we cannot with all our pains and industry attain the knowledge of. "To say, that when a place of Scripture," says the incomparable Mr Chillingworth, c. 2. s. 104, "by reason of ambiguous

terms, lies indifferent between divers senses, whereof one is true, and the other is false ; that God obliges men under the pain of damnation not to mistake through error and human frailty, is to make God a tyrant ; and to say, that he requires us certainly to attain that end, for the attaining whereof we have no certain means ; which is to say, that, like Pharaoh, he *gives no straw and requires brick, that he reaps where he sows not, that he gathers where he strews not ; that he will not be pleased with our utmost endeavours to please him, without full, and exact, and never failing performance ; that his will is, we should do what he knows we cannot do ; that he will not accept of us according to that which we have, but requireth of us what we have not ; which, whether it consisteth with his goodness, with his wisdom, or with his word, I leave it to honest men to judge."*

I cannot forbear transcribing from him the following instance, which is so exactly parallel to the matter in hand. "If I should send a servant to Paris, or Rome, or Jerusalem, and he, using his utmost diligence not to mistake his way, yet, notwithstanding, meeting often with such places where the road is divided into several ways, whereof one is as likely to be true, and as likely to be false as any other, should at length mistake, and go out of the way ; would not any man say, that I were an impotent, foolish, and unjust master, if I should be offended with him for doing so ? And shall we not tremble to impute that to God, which we

should take in foul scorn, if it were imputed to ourselves? Certainly, I, for my part, fear I should not love God, if I should think so strangely of him."

For any one therefore to imagine it zeal for God to persecute men for errors in speculation, which we are not able to correct, what is it but to betray an ignorance of God and of his attributes? It is calling God a tyrant, to say that he will punish them; and it is making men the devil's agents, for them to punish them; it is pride, malice, and uncharitableness; it is promoting the power and designs of Satan, and encouraging that scandalous and diabolical vice hypocrisy; it is suppressing truth itself; it is putting a stop to industry; in a word, it is neither *entering one's self*, nor *letting others*, (as much as we can help it,) *enter into the kingdom of heaven*.

When therefore I see a man of pride and haughtiness, of insolence, art, and cunning, one that never speaks his own real sentiments, but only what may make an auditory think him entirely in theirs; one that recommends concord and unanimity, and in order thereto endeavours to persuade others to leave off all hard words, yet instantly rises up and uses them himself; one that is fearful lest another should bear away the prize of elocution, or outstrip him in honours, interest, or favour; one that is aiming to be head of a party, and throwing out ill names, insinuations, and reproaches liberally upon an adversary, for the very things he has been guilty of himself; one that acts al-

ways a double part, and is so scrupulously zealous for the glory of God, and the respect to be paid to the sacred pages, as to imagine a scripture story profaned if put upon a sign ; in short, when I see a man ambitious, and resolved to sacrifice all to please the party in which he is engaged, sure I am, that one of this, or the like temper will shew a mighty zeal against any error, how innocent soever in itself ; will be ready to condemn any one that opposes him as a *heretic*, and will be for all the arbitrary proceedings and tyrannical prosecutions, that he can promote. Such an haranguer will be obstinate in his opinion, positive and confident in what he asserts, and nothing, no not the whole *bench of bishops* should they be ready to deliver an opinion contrary to his, would be able to alter the least tittle of his haughty spirit. Were not this spirit of *popery* too rife among *protestants*, I had not digressed, but had soon proceeded to the

Second sort of persons under error, viz. such whose errors have no necessary connexion with their practice, but yet may, through accident, have an influence upon it. As the former sort of erroneous persons were innocent and free from guilt, because their error was involuntary, so are these, when the reason is the same. The guilt of error is always to be measured by the disposition of him that is under it. If therefore it be not the result of negligence or carelessness, but was taken up after mature deliberation, I see not how it can expose any one to punishment from God. Thus, for

instance, should a man mistake the meaning of the word *ὁμοούσιος*, of *one substance*, when it is applied to the Son, and think it means *one individual stance* with the Father, and notwithstanding all he should do in examining and comparing texts of Scripture should yet continue fixed in that, as the only means of understanding how the *Father* and *Son* are *One* would, where he to explain himself, be found guilty of the error of either Tritheism or Socinianism; but he would be free from guilt before God under such circumstances. Or, suppose that one should dissent from the creed, commonly called of Athanasius, to be agreeable to the tenor of Scripture, that it would be inconsistent with the true interest of the christian religion to have it expunged the book of Common Prayer. These, and abundant more such errors have certainly no necessary connexion with practice. But notwithstanding, that, a man may be influenced by them in such a manner as to render himself justly punished by man. Suppose, for example, that one in such circumstances were to become turbulent to his neighbours, and injurious to them, no doubt the civil magistrate would have a right to punish him, notwithstanding the erroneous person might think it a *throwing away the essentials of faith, and the uniformity of worship* putting both them that differ from him, and himself into a *gulf of perdition*, to suffer others to prosecute their ways. The civil magistrate is not to direct himself by the conscience of others, but is to take care

the peace of society, the disturbance of which is, and ought to be, criminal before him. But then when these very actions come under the cognisance of God, at the great day of judgment, they will be considered in another manner; how far they were the effects of carelessness, of negligence, or sloth; and if the error itself was at first embraced as a real truth, and the obstacles which hindered the man from perceiving the truth were such as he could not surmount, after his best endeavours to know the truth, neither the error, nor its consequences, under these circumstances, will be punished by our equitable and righteous judge.

And here I think we may lay down this as a rule, by which we may judge of the importance of any error. *All such things may a man err in safely, of which he may safely be ignorant*; for if his salvation is not at stake by reason of his knowledge, supposing he masters the truth he aims at, it is superfluous knowledge in respect of salvation; and therefore if he mistakes it, he mistakes about something, which has no relation to his salvation.

But you will be apt perhaps to say, that evil thoughts are reckoned by our Saviour amongst *the things which defile a man*, Mat. xv. 19, 20. that they will certainly be punished, being certainly sinful; and that errors are evil thoughts, which injure the soul, which exclude the light of truth, and consequently defile and pollute the soul, and therefore must render a man obnoxious to punishment.

I need not stay to tell you, that evil thoughts do not signify erroneous ones, but such as, if indulged and prosecuted, will produce evil actions. Certain it is, that first motions are not in our powers; and God could not be said to act with justice, much less with equity or mercy, should he punish what is not in our power to prevent. But if these first motions, which I suppose to be of evil thoughts, be indulged, if we take a pleasure in them, it is evident then that we declare our approbation of them, and consequently we make them our own, and by that means the man is defiled, and will be punished for it.

Again, a man may be mistaken in numberless instances, which if he prosecutes, yet his errors will not produce any evil actions; but then a man cannot entertain an evil thought, but if he prosecutes that, it will produce wicked acts; which plainly shows a great difference between evil and erroneous thoughts.

To strengthen this, let me add an observation or two, viz. 1st. That nowhere in all the Scriptures do the Apostles, or our blessed Saviour, ever assert, that men should be punished for involuntary errors. 2dly. Everywhere, when occasion is taken to treat of the proceedings at the day of judgment, we find that our actions, and they only, are the subjects of inquiry. In that we have *DONE good or evil, the WORKERS of iniquity are to be rewarded or punished.* Vide Mat. vii. 21, 23; xiii. 41; xvi. 27; xxv. 31, 46; Luke xiii. 26; John v. 29; Rom. ii. 6, 7, 10, &c.

From these and other passages of the same import, I conclude that either the Judge of mankind has not truly told us the subjects of his inquiry at the last day, which would be blasphemy to say ; or else involuntary errors will not be punished. I proceed to the

Third sort of erroneous persons, viz. such whose errors have a necessary connexion with practice, but yet the connexion is not by them seen. However plain and evident the consequences of them are to others, yet whilst they are denied and avoided as so much poison by them, who embrace the error, such mistake cannot be but very innocent. There is not a plainer connexion between any principle and its consequences, than there is between a fixed belief of a fatality, and the reasonableness of running up to a loaded cannon's mouth ; or between a firm persuasion of God's having elected or reprobated men before they have done either good or evil, and the gratification of their inclinations ; and yet numbers that steadily believe the one, will detest and abhor the other. It seems very clear, that if a man be absolutely predestinated to happiness, and cannot fall from grace, nothing should hinder him from indulging his appetites or from enjoying all the pleasures of this life, since he cannot on any account fail of the next. Or in another instance, they that maintain good works not to be necessary to salvation, but resolve all into faith, why should not they prosecute their pleasures, and be the loose to their appetites ? Yet, notwithstan

the seemingly evident connexion, there are those who would lay down their lives rather than admit the conclusion. The reason of this conduct seems to be this; they admit an error as an indisputable truth; or, which amounts to the same in this case, they are deceived by an ambiguous expression of Scripture. The principle itself they take up with is true, when rightly understood; and finding it in Scripture, they are positive that no demonstration is stronger than this is,—God hath said it, therefore it is true. But running away with the words, they leave the meaning behind them, and admit verbal principles, if I may call them so, instead of ideal ones. They therefore will deny a consequence, which they find to be inconsistent with all the other notions of religion, which they entertain. They have the good fortune to be kept in their respective duties by other reasons, which are clear, and plain, and positive; and seeing the consequences deduced from their erroneous principles stare them so boldly in their faces, they abominate them; not because they really do not follow, but because they are evidently disagreeable to other notions, which they have equally imbibed.

Had all men judgment to discern error from truth, no one would continue under error. The firmness with which this sort of men embrace the notions, which they think are contained in the word of God, plainly shows them lovers of God, and of his Christ; it shows them honest, and very unwilling that man should extort

from them any sacred truth. They are ready to sacrifice their lives to man, in proof, that with sincerity they believe what God, they think, has revealed. They do their best to know his will, and to act according to it ; and therefore errors in such persons signify no more than no errors. Supposing they had had the good fortune to believe right, they would have been but the same good men ; their practices had been the same ; and since it is our works that will be rewarded or punished, they will certainly have their rewards, who continue good, notwithstanding principles, which have a necessary connexion with evil. Sure it is, that the errors of such people spring, not from choice or will, but from the force of what they think Scripture and reason. And if, as Mr Chillingworth incomparably argues, “ By reason of the seeming conflict which is oftentimes between Scripture, reason, and authority on the one side, and Scripture, reason, and authority on the other ; if by reason of the variety of tempers, abilities, educations, and unavoidable prejudices, whereby men’s understandings are variously formed and fashioned, they do embrace several opinions, whereof some must be erroneous ; to say that God will damn them for such errors, who are lovers of him, and lovers of truth, is to rob man of his comfort, and God of his goodness ; it is to make man desperate, and God a tyrant.”

The *fourth* and last, and only bad sort of erroneous persons, are such as err voluntarily, that is, through

carelessness, or sloth, and negligence ; and are unwilling to receive the truth when laid before them, and practice according to their errors. These it is certain will meet with their deserts, and are the objects of God's just punishments ; and the reason of it is, in such there is a want of honesty, or which is worse, the actual practice of dishonesty, insincerity, and their consequence. Here is affected ignorance, no desire of information or amendment ; here is a breach of clear, positive laws, and the concurrence of will and choice to render it perfect malice.

The zeal and warmth of some will be for loading this fourth article, and for bringing under these characters all whom they think fit to damn for schism or heresy, or even such whom they suspect of these crimes. Enough has been said already, I think, to satisfy an intelligent, impartial person. But yet I beg leave to subjoin, what will add a considerable force to what has been already offered to you, viz. the consideration of the obligations all men are under to follow their consciences, even though they are erroneous.

Agreed on all hands it is, that a conscience directed by the will and word of God obliges a man to act according to its dictates. Now conscience being the judgment which every man passes upon his actions, as to the goodness or illness of them, the question is only, how far a man is obliged to act in cases where he is mistaken in his judgment ? Now to this the answer

is easy ; that a man is obliged always to follow his judgment, though it is erroneous. For,

First ; conscience, or our judgment concerning things is a power or faculty of the mind, which God has implanted in us, on purpose to be the rule of our actions. When therefore we act in contradiction to that, our actions are voluntary, and contrary to the knowledge we have of God ; consequently we are guilty of voluntary disobedience, that is, of sin against God.

Secondly ; the evil of any action is always measured and judged of by God, and all good men, by the intention of the agent. What a man doth necessarily, is none of his act ; but so far as he concurs, consents, and wills any action, so far is he the agent. In an action therefore committed against conscience, the will being supposed entirely to concur, the agent must necessarily be dishonest, insincere, and consequently guilty of a vice.

Or thus ; that is the perpetual rule of all actions, which if we follow, we are honest ; if we do not, we are dishonest. Now such is conscience ; we are honest if we follow and practice virtue, known to us to be virtue ; as likewise, if we hate and avoid vice, known to us to be such. Now our conscience being our only guide or rule, and it being wickedness and hypocrisy to swerve from it, to act against conscience, must be wickedness. Should a Jew pretend to turn Christian, and offer himself at the font for baptism, and

yet not believe Christ to be come, nor anything of Christianity, every one would justly detest his hypocrisy and vileness, which is justly imputable to him, for acting contrary to his conscience.

Thirdly; the sacred pages justify the same doctrine, telling us, Rom. xiv. 23. *Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.* St Paul is plainly asserting that to be sin, which does not proceed from a *firm and full persuasion of mind*, that it is lawful and agreeable to the will of God. Now, whatsoever is contrary to conscience, is contrary to such a persuasion. Nay, St Paul carries this much farther in the former part of the verse; *He that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith.* And if he that doubteth is liable to punishment, because he doth a thing which he knows not whether it be lawful or not, much more doth he sin, who acts contrary to faith and full persuasion of mind.

Objection. You will say, perhaps, notwithstanding all this, and more which may be urged, that a man's conscience cannot be the rule of his actions, because a rule must always be right and straight; but conscience very often swerves from straightness by means of errors; therefore some other rule, even the rule of conscience itself, viz. the word of God, should be our guide.

Answer. The word of God is the rule of conscience, so far only as it is known and understood; and all men, no question, who know it to be the word

Of God, are ready to submit their judgments to it. But then he who lies under an erroneous conscience doth not know the will of God ; for if he knows it, how is he erroneous ? If he doth not know it, it is impossible for that to be his guide or rule.

You will say, a man ought, in such circumstances, to suspend his actions. That is, a man ought to suspend his actions when his conscience tells him that it is his duty to do them ; which is but little different from a contradiction.

But what must a man do in such unhappy circumstances, when the laws of God are contrary to one's conscience ?

The answer is obvious ; he must follow his conscience, let the consequence be what it will. Should he break the laws of God, not known or understood, by following his erroneous conscience, he would as certainly be free from guilt before God, as, were he literally to keep the laws of God, but yet act against his conscience, he would be guilty of a flagrant crime. This perhaps may seem a paradox ; but yet if there be a rule in any case of distinguishing between what is a sin and what is not one, it is easy to do so by the rule in the present case. As,

First ; that is a crime, which is committed with a base, vile, and dishonest mind and intention ; but he that acts with an erring conscience against the unknown, or not understood will of God, acts with a sincere and honest mind ; therefore to follow one's con-

science in such cases, even against the will of God, is not a crime. *Secondly*; the moral evil of any action is not to be judged of from the bare fact itself, but from the circumstances attending it. Every killing of a man is not murder; nor is every falsehood a lie; nor is every sort of taking away another man's goods theft and robbery. If killing a man, considered only as to the fact, were *malum in se*, then it would have been absolutely impossible that, in any circumstances, one might have taken away the life of another; or that God should ever have commanded Abraham to slay his son Isaac; because God would have commanded the performance of an act absolutely inconsistent with goodness; which would be a contradiction. We find that God himself excused even the killing of a man, if it were done through ignorance; *but the soul that doth ought presumptuously, the same reproacheth the Lord, and that soul shall be cut off from amongst his people.* Numb. xv. 30. It is then murder, when knowingly and designedly, against law, we take away the life of a man; it is theft, when we design the depriving another of what is his own, and illegally execute our designs; and so of other sins. Facts therefore done through mere involuntary error and unaffected ignorance, being always looked upon as free from crime, and such as are done with design being looked upon as criminal, it is evident that conscience is to be followed, and he is always guilty of the least crimes, who recedes the least from that.

Will an erroneous conscience therefore excuse all faults? Or will he that follows that be free from the imputation of sin? Will error, like charity, *cover the multitude of sins*? Or in what consists the crime of erroneous persons?

The crime consists in what I have more than once observed, in the negligence of such as are betrayed into error; which negligence is more or less punishable, as the will of God has been plainer or more discoverable by men. Punishable, I say, but not by man, unless the errors betray them into such acts as are inconsistent with the civil interests of mankind. For since the fault lies only in negligence, what man alive can tell what industry, pains or labour has been used to attain the truth? God, the searcher of hearts, can easily discover this; and therefore we are assured, Rom. i. 20. that 'the Gentiles are without excuse, for their follies and sins in idolatry, *because that which may be known of God is manifest in, or to, them; for the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.*

But then if the fault of negligence be removed, if diligence and industry be applied, and yet the error be insurmountable, it is plain the error is involuntary; it is necessary, because out of our power to remove it; and therefore the persons, under such mistake, are as free from crime, or the imputation of it, and as

innocent, as any orthodox persons are ; and I see not how God could either be good or just, if he laid it to their charge. Wherever there is crime there must be concurrence of will. He that follows an erroneous conscience, may be guilty of sin, if his error be voluntary ; but if he can be charged with neither negligence nor affected ignorance, nor any wilfulness, he cannot have any crime.

It is time now to look back, and to view the ground we have gone over. It is evident, I believe, *first*, that no involuntary errors are punishable. Therefore, *secondly*, that those persons whose errors are involuntary in purely speculative matters are not punishable. Nor, *thirdly*, such, whose involuntary errors have only accidental connexions with practice. Nor, *fourthly*, such, whose involuntary errors have a necessary connexion, so long as the connexion is not seen by them. The only punishable errors are such as are voluntary, and proceed from negligence ; and in this case too, to speak properly, it is the negligence, and not the error which is punishable. *Lastly*, it has been proved, that an erroneous conscience obliges us to follow its dictates, and that it is no crime to break the laws of God through unaffected ignorance, and always one to act against one's conscience.

Let me now a little touch those theological scare-crows, as they are commonly used, and as Mr Hales, in his tract of Schism, calls them, *Heresy* and *Schism*. From what has been said, it follows, that that heresy

cannot be damnable, which consists in the belief of any false notion embraced after search and careful inquiry, be it what it will; whether it be in a speculative matter, or in such points as have either accidental or necessary connexion with practice; and the reason is in all these cases, error is involuntary, and therefore is not punishable. It cannot be criminal, unless it proceed from wilful negligence in searching after the will of God, and inquiring into his laws. For if a great deal of pains and care has been used to know the mind of God, and yet we cannot attain it, it is not our fault, and consequently we cannot be chargeable. "For if God," says Mr Chillingworth, "would have had his meaning in these places certainly known, how could it stand with his wisdom to be so wanting to his own will and end as to speak obscurely? Or, how can it consist with his justice, to require of men to know certainly the meaning of those words, which he himself hath not revealed? Suppose there were an absolute monarch, that in his own absence from one of his kingdoms, had written laws for the government of it, some very plainly, and some very ambiguously and obscurely, and his subjects should keep those that were plainly written with all exactness; and for those that were obscure, use their best diligence to find his meaning in them, and obey them according to the sense of them which they conceive; should this king either with justice or wisdom be offended with these subjects, if by reason of

the obscurity of them, they mistook the sense of them, and fail of performance, by reason of their error ?

To make therefore heresy punishable, it must first be proved criminal ; and to do that, it must be proved voluntary or to proceed from negligence. And then the definition of it must be, not, as it is usually put, for an error in fundamentals, but something else. However, when once men are agreed upon what are fundamentals, and lay aside human deductions, as certainly nonfundamentals ; sure it is, that a great many notions, to serve a party, frequently called heresies, will be blotted out of the catalogue. A heretic that is punishable, is one that maintains doctrines contrary to the doctrines of Christ, through pride, or vain glory, or any sinister end ; so that the fault of a heretic lies in the irregularity of his will, not in his understanding. God may punish such, consistent with goodness, justice, and mercy ; and in such cases every man should follow the Apostle's rule concerning heretics, Tit. iii. 10, 11. *A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject ; knowing that he that is such is subverted and sinneth, being condemned of himself.* For surely such a heretic, as is before mentioned, who will presume to teach doctrines from such carnal ends, has all the characters which the Apostle gives ; he is subverted, he sins, he is selfcondemned ; but as for that which generally bears the name of heresy, viz. an error in some speculations about the Trinity, or other myste-

ries of Christianity, a man who has carefully studied, and is only mistaken in these matters, will hardly be found to have above one of the three characters the Apostle gives of a heretic. If he be subverted, yet it will be hard to prove sin, or selfcondemnation, upon him.

In short, heresy is not an error of the understanding, but of the will. If errors of the understanding are criminal, let all be so, and punish philosophical ones as well as theological, and take into the account all others too, and *let him that is without sin amongst you cast the first stone*. If this seem shocking, give but a good reason why theological errors of the understanding must be sinful and liable to punishments, and I will venture to promise to prove others to be under the same predicament. If you allow me, that heresy be an error of the will, then tell me why the man that impartially studies the Scriptures, and differs in his notions from the received hypotheses, in some mysterious speculative matters, is branded with the ignominious character of heretic? It is surprising, therefore, that a professed opinion, accompanied with charity and good nature, should become more criminal in some men's minds, than even a wicked life. If it were in my choice to appear before the great Searcher of hearts, in what manner I would, I would rather appear with a thousand errors, and what some call heresies, about me, if they were such as proceeded from real judgment, after all my industry to search

out truth, and to know the will of God, than to appear as one who has been ever drunk, or unjust, or profane, without one speculative error in his head.

And yet how lightly are these passed over, and how terribly is an erroneous person, or perhaps one no more than suspected of error, hampered, persecuted, and worried? "Anciently," says Mr Hales, in his sermon upon Rom. xiv. 1. "heretical and orthodox Christians, many times, even in public holy exercise, conversed together without offence. It is noted in the ecclesiastical stories, that the Arians and right believers so communicated together in holy prayers, that you could not distinguish them till they came to the *Δοξολογία*, the *Gloria Patri*, which the Arians used with some difference from other Christians. But those were times, *quorum lectionem habemus, virtutem non habemus*; we read of them in our books, but we have lost the practice of their patience." And presently afterwards, "SEVERITY against, and SEPARATION from heretical companies, took its beginning from the heretics themselves." This latter is plainly a mistake in this great man. For severity on religious accounts plainly took its beginning from the *orthodox*. But if you will say, what I will not at present examine or refute, that the fact was otherwise, I shall ask, whence then is it that orthodox persons are so ready to follow the evil example of heretics, and what is more, the very worst part of their example? Whence is it, that they so readily embrace the means

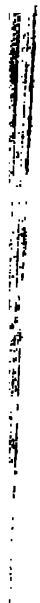
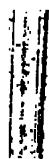
which were invented by erroneous persons to carry on a wrong cause? Do but consult experience and that will tell you, that since the time when force and temporal punishments were first used to propagate notions, it has been ten times, I might say ten thousand times, used to propagate errors, instead of once to propagate truth.

As to *Schism*, I shall only add, that from what has been said, nothing can be inferred that will encourage that; and I cannot but refer you to Mr Hale's tract upon that subject, which you cannot read without both pleasure and advantage.

If, Sir, you should think fit to make a public reply to what is here offered, I know you are too much a gentleman to catch at words, and let go my meaning. I persuade myself that you will believe me, when I assure you, that I love truth for its own sake, and am overjoyed when I find it, though it makes against me. I only allot to truth the first place in my heart; next to that, you have the preeminence in,

SIR,

Your most obedient Servant.



SELECTION
FROM THE WRITINGS
OF
George
DR BENSON.

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GEORGE BENSON.

THE character of a very learned theologian, and of a most zealous and persevering inquirer after truth, justly belongs to Dr Benson. Few men have exhibited a fairer mind, or laboured with more intenseness of purpose to discover the exact meaning of the sacred Scriptures; and few have done more by their writings to throw light on some of the dark points of theology, or by the example of a good life to adorn the profession and faith of a Christian.

He was born at Great Salkeld in Cumberland, on the first of September, 1699. His parents, who were distinguished for their piety and devotedness to religion, early destined him for the christian ministry. After a due course of preparation he entered the University of Glasgow, where he continued till 1721. Near the close of this year he went to London, and having been examined and approved by a body of Presbyterian clergymen, he soon began to preach under their auspices. He was particularly fortunate in the friendship of the learned Dr Calamy, in whose family he resided for some time, and by whose recommendation and influence he was unanimously chosen

pastor of a dissenting congregation at Abington, Berkshire. In this place he remained seven years, sedulously devoted to his studies and the duties of his profession. While at Abington he published three discourses, chiefly designed for young persons. These discourses, although they were received with approbation, he afterwards refused to have reprinted, alleging as a reason, that his inquiries had led him to distrust the accuracy of the doctrines inculcated in them, and that he could not conscientiously suffer anything under his control to go out to the public, of the truth of which he had not an unwavering conviction. In short, he had been educated a Calvinist, but as he studied the Scriptures more profoundly he could not find the doctrines of Calvinism there, and he was obliged to dismiss them from his creed, or sacrifice his integrity to the blind reverence of a system, for which he could discover no foundation either in reason or the word of God. Benson was not a man to hesitate for a moment in deciding on the course, which he ought to pursue; he was equally constant in searching for the truth, and fearless in avowing and defending it.*

* The independence of his spirit, and his mode of thinking in regard to human forms of faith and worship, are strikingly illustrated in the following letter to Mr Towgood, written by Dr Benson about four years before his death.

"DEAR SIR,

"I herewith send you a copy of a letter concerning nonconformity. I was desirous you should see it, because I hope you are pre-

While at Abington he also published a treatise entitled a *Defence of the Reasonableness of Prayer*. This was accompanied by a translation of the short work of Maximus Tyrius, in which are contained several objections to the propriety and purpose of prayer. Benson answered these objections. It was in connexion with this performance, that he published the tract on *Predestination*, containing an intelligible and practical view of a subject, which has so long contributed food to the insatiable, bewildering metaphysics of speculative divines, confounding the counsels of

ceeding in your answer to Powel's Sermon concerning subscription to the Thirty Nine Articles in any sense, in every sense, and in no sense at all ; as articles of truth, which are not true ; as articles of peace, which create endless contentions ; as articles of the church of England, which the divines of that church commonly refute ; as articles made to prevent diversity of opinions, and which greatly increase diversity of opinions ; as articles made in the days of bigotry by men, who had no critical skill in the Scriptures, to fetter the ages of learning and free inquiry. And for five hundred pounds per annum, or less money there are men who will subscribe, who will contend for subscribing to these same articles, whether ministers believe them or not. *Pudet haec opprobria.*

"I am pleased that I have had the happiness to see you once. I shall never see you more in this world. I am delighted with the prospect of meeting you in a better state, where there are no subscriptions to articles required, no bigotry, nor anything to offend any more.

"With great esteem for you,

"I am yours sincerely,

"GEORGE BENSON."

The above letter was first published in the *Monthly Repository*, Volume VIII, for 1813, and was communicated to that work by Mr Manning of Exeter, who had received the original from the daughter of Mr Towgood.

truth and reason, and driving plain common sense to despair and distraction. The author was induced to examine, with great caution, an article of faith, which he had received as a leading tenet of the christian system, but which his conscience and maturer judgment, strengthened by the light of Scripture, told him was only a shadow, having nothing to do with the realities constituting the religion of Jesus. The fruit of his inquiry, and the sources of his conviction, are presented in this tract.

A society of dissenters in Southwark invited the author to become their pastor in the year 1729. He accepted the invitation, and discharged the duties of a clergyman in that place eleven years. In 1740 he was settled at Crouched Friars as a colleague with Dr Lardner. To the pastoral charge of this society Dr Benson was devoted till, near the close of his life, his growing infirmities compelled him to resign. He lived in great harmony with Dr Lardner, and although in several particulars their opinions were not the same, yet they often discussed these topics in a friendly manner, and with an attachment increased in proportion as they were convinced, by their constant intercourse, of each other's sincerity and singleness of character. They were associated eleven years, and when Dr Lardner resigned his place in 1751, Dr Benson wrote to him as follows. "I was so much affected on Monday evening upon reading your letter, that I had very little sleep that night; and my mind still remains greatly

affected with the thoughts of parting with you ; for though I cannot but own I feel the weight of your reasons, yet I must frankly tell you, that I do not expect ever to have an assistant, in whom I can place so thorough a confidence, and for whom I can entertain so warm an affection, and so high an esteem. I thank you heartily for all your friendly, kind, and obliging treatment of me, especially since I came to Crouched Friars, and I earnestly desire that our friendship may never be interrupted.”* Dr Lardner was now seventy five years old, and was obliged to desist from preaching by reason of his deafness, and the effects of advancing age.

Dr Benson applied himself with particular earnestness to a critical study of the Scriptures. He was captivated with Locke’s mode of interpreting and illustrating the Epistles of Paul, and formed a design of completing the work so successfully begun by this great writer. In the prosecution of this plan he published, in the year 1731, a *Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistle to Philemon*. This specimen met with signal favour from the public, and he was encouraged to proceed in the same manner through the other Epistles. They were all finished, and published at different times. They are now usually found together in two quarto volumes. His paraphrase is exactly on the plan of Locke’s, but the notes are more elaborate,

* *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the late Rev. Nathaniel Lardner, D. D.* London. 1769. p. 107.

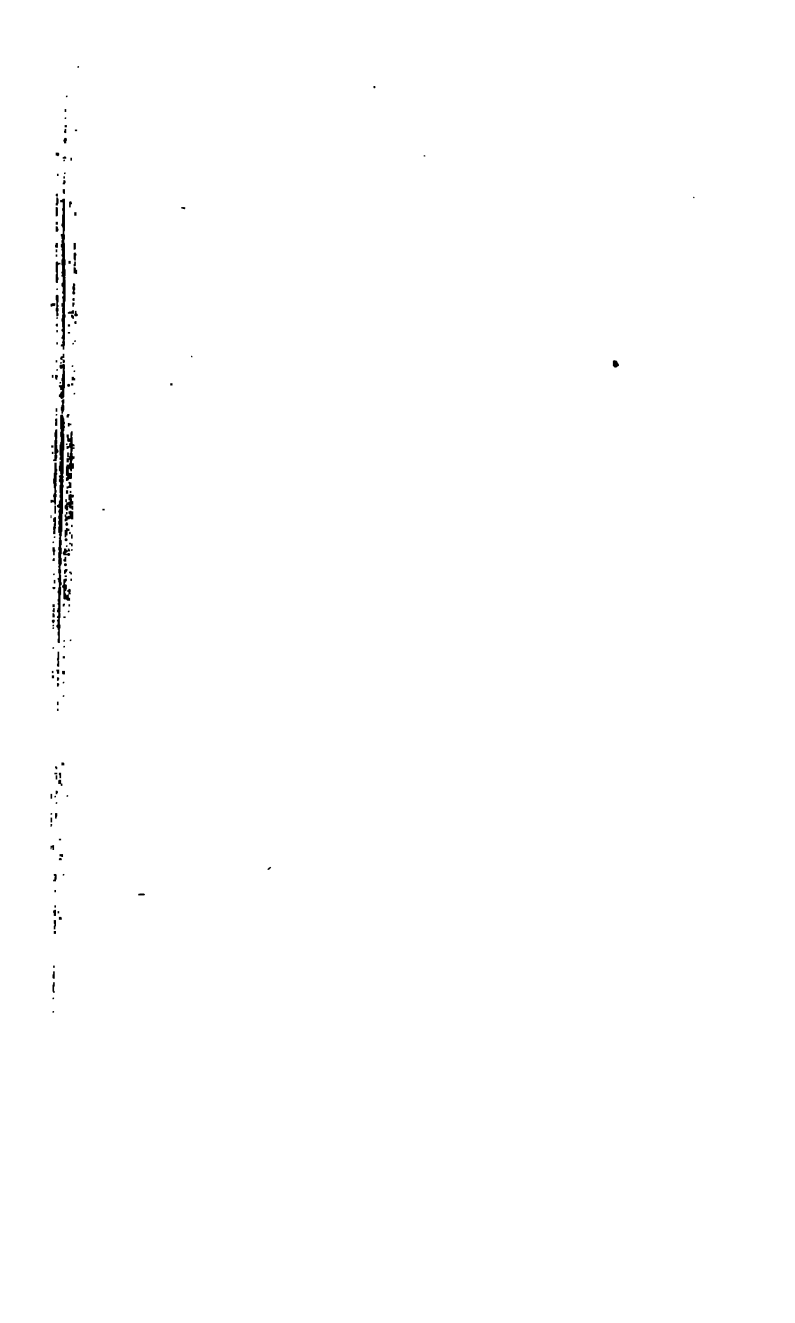
and comprise a much greater mass of critical learning. Several *Dissertations* are interspersed here and there on some of the more difficult passages of Scripture. These are distinguished for the rational views of theology contained in them, and for the profound critical knowledge of the author. The dissertation attached to the Epistle to Philemon attempts to prove, from the spirit and views of the Apostle Paul as displayed in his writings, that he was neither an impostor nor enthusiast, and therefore that what he wrote must be true, and the christian religion a divine revelation. This was the groundwork of the famous argument, which Lord Littleton has since illustrated with so much beauty and force.

In 1735 the author published his *History of the First Planting of the Christian Religion*; a work of much research, containing instruction in regard to the origin of the Epistles, and numerous collateral and corresponding proofs of their authenticity, and the sacred character of their authors.

Benson's Paraphrase and Notes to the Epistle of James was translated into Latin by John David Michaelis in 1746, and to this translation a recommendatory preface was prefixed by the German professor Baumgarten. The author's dissertation on the authenticity of the text of the *three heavenly witnesses* was translated into Latin by Andrew G. Mash, who added copious notes. In these he attempted to support the authenticity of the text against the arguments

of Benson, which circumstance gives additional value to the following commendation. *Auctor ejus dissertationis magnus est ille Anglorum theologus, verbique divini apud Londinenses minister, meritissimus Georgius Bensonius.*

Dr Benson published other works in theology, particularly a treatise on the *Reasonableness of Christianity*, and a volume of *Sermons*. He left in manuscript a *Life of Christ*, which was published as a posthumous work by Dr Amory, who prefixed to the volume a short biographical memoir of the author. He enjoyed the friendship of several men of eminence, both among the dissenters and in the established church, with whom he was in the habit of familiar correspondence. His close application to study, and his sedentary mode of life, impaired his health, and he complains in the prefaces to some of his works, that his health and spirits were not adequate to his laborious undertakings. He died on the sixth of April, 1762, in the sixty third year of his age.



ESSAY

ON THE BELIEF OF THINGS

ABOVE REASON.

FROM BENSON'S TRACTS.

THEOPHILUS and **Pyrrho**, who had spent so much time in conversing about the *Reasonableness of the Christian Religion as delivered in the Scriptures*,* continued the same friendly regards as formerly, and freely imparted their sentiments to each other, upon all subjects that occurred.

One evening they were talking over public affairs; and **Theophilus** was expatiating upon the insolence and boundless ambition of such tyrannical and aspiring monarchs, who can sacrifice the lives of thousands to their pride and vanity; who care not how many are made widows or orphans; how much trade lan-

* The reference here is to the author's work with this title, parts of which are in the form of a dialogue between two persons distinguished by the above fictitious names. This essay was written chiefly in reply to some popular objections, which had been advanced against that work.—ED.

guishes ; how much the course of law is stopped ; and how many towns and countries become a heap of desolation and ruin, especially where the seat of war happens to be ; or how much all the liberal arts and sciences languish, amidst the sound of arms, and the hoarse voice of war.

Have such ambitious monarchs no bowels, no humanity, none of the tender sentiments, and kind affections ? I hope the time approaches, when they shall receive a proper rebuke ; and be disabled, at least for one generation, from molesting the surrounding nations, and disturbing the repose and tranquillity of Europe.

But Pyrrho stopped Theophilus, in the midst of his pathetic oration, and gave a turn to the conversation, by saying, he knew that moral and religious subjects were most agreeable to his friend Theophilus, that there was one interesting subject, on which he had touched in his *Reasonableness of the Christian Religion*, and in the *Appendix* ; that what he had there said was entirely satisfactory to some, but that others either hesitated, or absolutely denied the truth of what he had asserted.

When Theophilus was going to inquire, what he referred to, Pyrrho said he had lately received a letter from a friend of his, who corresponded with him upon many occasions ; that the letter was entirely upon the subject he now referred to ; and that therefore he would read it, if Theophilus pleased.

Theophilus gratefully accepted of his offer ; upon which he read, as follows.

“ Dear Sir,

“ When I have no news to impart, I collect what materials I can, of any other kind, to show how desirous I am to keep up a correspondence with you. An ingenious gentleman of my acquaintance, whom I will call *Novatianus*, was in company with the lady *Aspasia*, who was exclaiming bitterly against a certain preacher, whose historical name shall be *Eusebius*. For Eusebius had asserted something, in one of his sermons, which gave the lady great offence. Upon which she condemned him, with a warm zeal, and great fluency of speech ; and declared, *she would never hear him more as long as she lived*. This occasioned the following dialogue between her and my friend.

“ *Novatianus*. What was it, madam, in Eusebius’s sermon, which offended you so much ?

“ *Aspasia*. He asserted that *we are to believe nothing but what we can understand*.

“ *Novatianus*. Was that the thing which gave you so much offence ?

“ *Aspasia*. Yes, Sir, and enough too. I wonder how any body can venture to assert such a thing.

“ So far the dialogue proceeded ; and then they conversed, for an hour or two, about other matters ; by which means this affair was quite forgot. Then Novatianus begged the favour of a pen and ink, and

a small piece of paper ; all which a servant readily brought him. Upon the paper he wrote down the following words in Greek, ὁ Θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν· and then very gravely gave them to the lady, and desired her to read them. That revived the dialogue, which proceeded as follows. Aspasia, looking first upon the paper, and then looking earnestly, and with surprise and confusion, in Novatianus's face, said, sir, I cannot read them. What do you mean by this ? It is not English, and they are strange letters to me. I cannot imagine what you design, by asking me to read what I know nothing about. Novatianus gravely said, do you believe them, madam ?

“How can I, answered Aspasia, with great quickness, unless I understand them ?

“Hold, madam, replied Novatianus, you may surely believe things, which you cannot understand.

“*Aspasia.* That is impossible.

“*Novatianus.* Then I find that you are, after all, of Eusebius's opinion, notwithstanding his sermon offended you so much.

“This startled the lady, and caused her to say ; *I profess, I believe I am wrong.* The thing never appeared to me in this light before. I really begin to suspect that I was mistaken, and that Eusebius was in the right. I beg his pardon for condemning him before I had duly considered the reasonableness of what he said. But what is the meaning of these words ? For I cannot so much as read them.

“Novatianus said, I will assure you, madam, they are the words of holy Scripture; and that according to the original. They contain a plain truth, and a very great and important truth. I would therefore have you try once more whether you cannot believe them before you understand them. Aspasia was now impatient to have them explained; and said to Novatianus, teaze me no longer. I freely acknowledge, that I was too rash and inconsiderate; and I am now fully convinced, that I cannot tell whether I believe what you propose to me, or not, till I understand what is meant thereby. Pray tell me, therefore, what the words signify; and keep me no longer in suspense. As soon as I understand them, I will then tell you frankly whether I believe them or not.

“Well then, said Novatianus, I will gratify you by telling you that you may find the passage, 1 John iv. 8. and the English of it is, *God is love*.

“That proposition, said Aspasia, I most readily and firmly believe; but I find that I could not believe it, till I understood it. I heartily beg Eusebius’s pardon, and sincerely condemn my own folly and imprudence, in censuring what I ought to have applauded. I will promise you I will go and hear him again, and shall now have a better opinion of him than ever.

“The next time that Novatianus visited Aspasia, she continued of the same mind, and severely condemned herself, but applauded Eusebius, and thanked Novatianus for taking so kind and ingenious a

method of leading her into right sentiments upon that head ; but was ready to wonder that she had not, before that, seen the matter in the same light, as it appeared so very obvious, now she had attended to it and carefully considered it.

“ I know, my friend Pyrrho, that you are a speculative man, and will make reflections on such a story, which would not occur to others. Instead of news therefore or business, I thought it might not be amiss to send you this story. If it can afford you any useful hints, it is at your service. If not, accept it as a testimony of my being ready to oblige you.”

When Pyrrho had read this letter, Theophilus said, that Novatianus had acted like a man of sense ; and that he had clearly shown that *men cannot believe what they do not understand*. How, said Pyrrho, is it possible that Theophilus and I should think so much alike upon such a subject ? Yes, said Theophilus, and I further apprehend that, when the terms are explained, and persons of different sects and parties understand one another upon this head, they are more agreed than is at first imagined. Pyrrho could hardly be persuaded of this, and alleged, that it was the opinion of the *infidels*, that *men must understand before they can believe* ; and he observed, that they commonly charged Christians, and even divines, with being of the contrary opinion. You know very well, Theophilus, that the author of *Christianity not founded on Argument*, has in a sneering manner said,

“Though men cannot be all of one opinion, they may of *one faith* ; which they hold, not in unity of understanding, but, as our Liturgy well expresses it, *in the bond of peace and unity of spirit.*”

And again, “I am fully persuaded, that the judging at all of religious matters is not the proper province of *reason* ; or, indeed, an affair where she has any concern.”

I need not point you out more passages to the same purpose in an author, which you have so much studied.

The author of *Christianity as old as the Creation* [pp. 199, &c. 12mo. ed.] says, “If I do not understand the terms of a proposition ; or if they are inconsistent with one another ; or so uncertain, that I know not what meaning to fix on them ; here is nothing told me, and consequently no room for belief. But, although designing men very well know, that it is impossible to believe, when we know not what it is we are to believe ; or to believe an absurd or contradictory proposition ; yet they, because without examination people may be brought to fancy they believe such things, and it being their interest to confound men’s understandings, and prevent all inquiry, craftily invented the notion of believing things *above reason*. Here the ravings of an enthusiast are on a level with the dictates of infinite wisdom, and nonsense is rendered most sacred ; here a contradiction is of great use to maintain a doctrine, that, when fairly stated, is

testimony, the assent to that is properly called *faith*. If it be the testimony of man, it is *human faith*, if it be the testimony of God, it is *divine faith*.

But, in all these cases, it is impossible to assent to that, of which we have no ideas, for that would be to believe we know not what. And, if we have credible testimony, or some other good arguments, then we have a *reason* for believing; otherwise we believe we know not why. And we ought, in all such cases, to suspend our belief, or withhold our assent.

Pyrrho said, I think I clearly apprehend your meaning, which I would express in my own way, and I desire you would set me right, if, in any particular, I have mistaken you.

There are two parts in every proposition, a *subject* and a *predicate*, which are united in an affirmative, or separated in a negative, proposition. Now we must have the ideas affixed to the words, which express the *subject*, and the *predicate*; or understand the *subject*, and what is affirmed, or denied, concerning that *subject*. And we must likewise have the testimony of God, or of some credible person, for joining those two ideas together in an affirmative proposition; or separating them in a negative proposition. And without understanding the words, and having that, or some other *reason* for assenting to the proposition, which they express, we can neither understand nor believe anything about them.

Theophilus acknowledged, that Pyrrho had spoken exactly agreeable to his sentiments on this subject.

proposition is laid before us, and we are required to believe it, it is necessary we should understand the words in which it is expressed or delivered. Your friend Novatianus has clearly shown, that as long as it continues in an unknown language, we can neither believe nor know anything about it.

But suppose we understand the words in which any proposition is expressed, or have in our minds the ideas signified by those words, it does not follow from thence, that we must immediately believe that proposition to be true. No doctrine of *divine revelation* can possibly contradict any principle of reason, or be inconsistent with it. Neither can any two doctrines or propositions in divine revelation be contradictory to, or irreconcilable with, one another. In such cases, the things proposed cannot be any part of *divine revelation*, though some persons may assert them to be so. Or, if the words in which they are expressed be contained in the divine writings, we may depend upon it, we have not yet found out the right meaning of those words.

If a proposition be selfevident, or we perceive the truth of it by *intuition* ; or, if it be proved by a train of undoubted propositions, each of them ranged in a proper order, and connected with one another, which is termed *demonstration* ; then we do not call that *faith*, but *knowledge*. If there be only probable arguments for the truth of any proposition, we call that *opinion*. If a proposition is supported by credible

immortal, without dying." And, in delivering that truth, he says, *Behold, I show you a mystery*. And, in other places the same Apostle talks of *making known the mystery of the Gospel*. The truth of the case is, the Gospel is not a *hidden* but a *revealed mystery*, made known to the world to enlighten their understandings, to lead them to the practice of universal righteousness, and thereby to their true dignity, perfection, and happiness.

In the next place Pyrrho alleged, that divines had often asserted, "that we may and ought to believe things *above reason*, though not contrary to it."

Theophilus replied, that there were two senses in which this proposition might be interpreted. The one is, that *faith*, or what is revealed as the object of faith, contains some things which *human reason alone, and of itself*, could not have found out; but if known at all must be discovered by *revelation*. For instance, "that men are to be raised from the dead; that Jesus Christ is to judge the world." And in this sense, I suppose, all who acknowledge *divine revelation* are agreed, that some of the objects of *faith* are above *human reason*; or, in other words, that there are some things discovered in the Bible, which could not have been known to men, unless they had been communicated by *divine revelation*.

But there is another sense in which *faith* has by some been affirmed to be *above reason*; viz. that men may, and ought to believe things, which they cannot

understand or comprehend. And in this sense I look upon the assertion to be groundless and false ; and that, in this sense, *faith* can no more be *above reason*, than it can be *contrary to it*.

Pyrrho proceeded in his objections, and said, there are numberless things, which exceed our capacity, or which are unintelligible and incomprehensible to us, at least in the present state ; and yet we firmly believe them, though we do not understand them ; and therefore it is plain we may believe things which we do not understand.

Theophilus desired Pyrrho to name one of those many propositions, which he believed, though he did not understand it.

Pyrrho replied that, as to giving an account of his own faith, he desired to be excused ; and that he was not a divine sufficiently learned and profound readily to mention such a proposition. He intimated further, that he was representing the sentiments of others, and that he had frequently met with this objection.

Theophilus acknowledged that there are many things, which we do not understand. But then, said he, as long as we do not understand them, they are the objects, not of *our faith*, but of *our ignorance*. For, as long as we understand them not, the assenting to them is in effect assenting to nothing ; and that is in reality no assent at all.

Well but, Theophilus, said Pyrrho, will you not allow that there are many things, which we actually and

firmly believe, though we cannot comprehend how they are effected ; or do not understand the mode or manner of their existence, with all their relations, connexions, and circumstances? For instance, we believe that God made the world, though we do not know how he made it. We believe that the soul and body of man are united, and mutually influence one another, though we do not know how they are united, or how body and spirit can have such a mutual influence. We believe that God will raise the dead, but how he will do it, that we understand not, neither can we at present comprehend. And many more like instances might be named.

Theophilus replied, that the same answer might be returned to this objection as to the last, viz. as far as we believe, so far we must have ideas ; and that, where our ideas end, there ends our assent or faith. Unless we understand what is meant by these words, *God created the world*, how could we talk or think about such a thing ? Unless we had the ideas affixed to the words *body* and *spirit*, we could not talk of their union. And, if we have no meaning to such words, then to say *they are united*, would be to talk of the union of nothing with nothing. So likewise we know what is meant by a man's being dead, and raised, or brought to life again ; otherwise we should mean nothing, when we speak of the resurrection from the dead. To believe that God made the world is to believe a thing, that is both comprehensible and highly

reasonable. Who should make the world but God? Such an extensive and complicated, such a wise and glorious production must needs have been the effect of the most consummate wisdom, goodness, and power, exerted immediately by the first cause and original author of all ; or by some being, that has derived his power from the first cause. From the visible creation, we are naturally led up to the invisible cause and author of all ; and here is nothing incomprehensible in all this. *That God made the world* is one proposition. *How he made it* would be another, and a quite different proposition. The first we believe and understand. The latter we know and understand nothing of. The last, therefore, is not the object of *our knowledge*, or of *our faith*, but of *our ignorance*. *That the soul and body of man are united* is one proposition. *How they are united* would be another, and a quite different proposition. The first we understand and believe. The latter we know nothing of. This last therefore, again, is the object of *our ignorance*, not of *our knowledge* or *faith*. That men are to die, and that Jesus Christ will raise them from the dead, or bring them to life again, are propositions contained in Scripture ; and they are both very plain and intelligible. *How Jesus Christ will raise the dead* is another, and a quite different proposition, which God hath not seen fit to reveal to us. We are not, therefore, required to know or believe anything about it. The fact, in all these cases, is one thing ; the mode or manner is another

and a quite distinct thing. The former we understand and believe. The latter we neither understand nor believe ; for we know nothing at all of it.

Pyrrho said, Theophilus, suppose that God should tell you, *that a thing is so and so* ; will you not believe it, unless he acquaint you with the mode or manner of it ; how it is effected or how it exists ; or how it is reconcileable with all the other truths you are acquainted with ? Theophilus answered, as far as God reveals anything, so far he explains or discovers it. And whatever God says, I am very ready to assent to it, for that very reason, that God hath said it. Because whatever God says must be true. But I must understand what is said, as well as be satisfied that the discovery came from God, before I can believe it *as a divine revelation*. If God reveals anything with its mode and manner, and all its relations and circumstances, then I believe that, with its mode and manner, and all its relations and circumstances. If God reveals part of a thing, as far as God reveals it so far I believe it. *Secret things belong to the Lord our God*. They are his peculiar, and we have nothing to do with them. They cannot, therefore, be the objects of our knowledge or of our faith.

Whatever contradicts a known truth, or is irreconcilable with it, that cannot possibly be part of *a divine revelation*. As long as I think it inconsistent with any known truth, so long I must either reject it, or suppose that I have not yet the true meaning of

the words in which it is delivered. Where our ideas are clear, there our faith may be clear. Where our ideas are confused or obscure, there our faith must necessarily be confused or obscure. Where our ideas are adequate, there our faith may be adequate. Where our ideas are short or partial, there our faith must be partial, or extended only to part of a thing. But where we have no ideas at all, there we can have no faith at all.

Pyrro smiled and said, surely, Theophilus, you are a strange man ; and I could hardly have believed it of you. What, will no objection stand before you ? Nor anything prove to you, *that men may believe what they cannot understand* ? I have one objection more, which so modest a man, as you are, will scarce know what to say to. And that is, that *fathers* as well as *moderns*, *doctors* and *bishops*, *philosophers* and *divines*, eminently learned, great and good men, have contended for believing things which we do not understand. And surely, such wise and good men could never all be mistaken ; neither can it be supposed that they would have contended for this opinion, unless there had been truth and reason in it.

You yourself have acknowledged that Tertullian said of one article, "I believe it, because it is impossible." And that bishop Beveridge has assigned it as a reason for his believing another article of faith, "That he could not conceive or *understand* it."*

* See the Reasonableness of the Christian Religion, &c. p. 132, &c.

Theophilus observed that, in mentioning such particulars, he had made his remarks upon them ; which plainly showed he greatly disapproved of such obnoxious expressions. But Pyrrho said, that to show that those mentioned were not singular, he could produce other celebrated persons to confirm their opinion.

St Austin often cites what he had read in the LXX, and *vulgar Latin*,—*If you do not believe you shall not understand*,—to infer from it, *that we must believe divine truths, before we understand them*. And the crowd of Popish writers follow him, to authorise a blind and *implicit faith*. Theophilus replied, if St Austin had had an exact translation *of that passage*, he had only read, *unless you believe*, [viz. that the kingdoms of *Assyria* and *Israel* shall shortly be destroyed,] *you shall not be established*.*

Pyrrho owned that those he had already quoted were, indeed, *divines* ; and he observed, that the author of *Christianity as old as the Creation* had insinuated, that “it was their interest to confound men’s understandings, and to prevent all inquiry ; and therefore they have craftily invented the notion of believing things *above reason*.” But there are others who have contended for the same thing.

You have quoted Lord Bacon as saying something very like it.† And there have been others as well as *divines*, persons of excellent judgment, and great

* See an Essay for a new Translation of the Bible, p. 63.

† See *The Reasonableness of the Christian Religion*, &c. p. 132.

friends to free inquiry, and who were never suspected of a design to impose upon and confound men's understandings, that yet have thought it just to admit the notion of *things above reason*. I shall mention only two more, both of them *laymen* of eminent note for their attempts to inform and improve men's understandings, and promote useful knowledge, Mr Boyle and Mr Locke.

That excellent philosopher, the great and good Mr Boyle, has written a treatise, which he calls a *Discourse of Things above Reason; inquiring whether a philosopher should admit there are any such. To which are annexed some advices about judging of things said to transcend reason*.

In that discourse, he ranks *things above reason*, under three heads. The first is, of things whose nature is such, that we are not able distinctly and adequately to comprehend it. Such is the Almighty God, whose perfections are so boundless, and his nature so singular, that it is presumption to imagine, that such finite beings, as our souls, can frame full and adequate ideas of them. The second sort consists of things, which have properties and ways of operation, which we cannot intelligibly account for or explain by any thing we already know. The third sort is, of such things that involve some notion or proposition, that we see not how to reconcile with some other thing, that we are persuaded to be truth; and which are incumbered with difficulties and objections, that cannot directly and satisfactorily be resolved. All these he

calls *privileged things* ; because they surpass *our reason* ; at least so far that they are not to be judged of, by the same measures and rules, by which men are wont to judge of ordinary things. Accordingly, he puts it among the advices he gives in judging of things that transcend our reason, that a matter of fact or other truth, about *privileged things*, being proved by arguments competent in their kind, we ought not to deny it, merely because we cannot explain, or perhaps so much as conceive the *modus* of it ; or because we know not how to reconcile it to something that is true ; or because it is liable to ill consequences, and is incumbered with great inconveniences. All these things he admirably illustrates and supports by a variety of instances well urged from *Philosophy* and *Natural Theology* ; and concludes, with observing, that we must not expect as to *privileged things*, and the propositions that may be formed about them, to resolve all difficulties and answer all objections ; since we can never directly answer those, which require for their solution a perfect comprehension of what is infinite.

Here Pyrrho made a pause ; but Theophilus desired him to proceed with what he had to allege from Mr Locke ; and then he would make remarks upon all his examples at once.

Well then, said Pyrrho, the other person I refer to is the acute and sagacious Mr Locke, whom I suppose the author of *Christianity as old as the Creation* would not reckon among *those designing men, whose interest it is to confound men's understandings*. Ha

divides things into those which are *according to reason*; those things, which are *contrary to reason*; and those things, which are *above reason*. And these things, when revealed, he makes to be the proper matter of *faith*. [See *Essay on Human Understanding*, Book IV. Chap. xvii. s. 23, and Chap. xviii. s. 7. 9.] He frequently sets himself to point out the shortness of human understanding, and how unable we are to comprehend or explain things, of which yet we have an undoubted certainty. Of these he gives various instances. Among other things he instances in the very notion of *body*; which is incumbered with some difficulties very hard, and perhaps impossible to be explained or understood by us. The divisibility *in infinitum* of any finite extension, involving us, whether we grant or deny it, in consequences impossible to be explicated, or made in our apprehension consistent. And he would fain know what substance exists, that has not something, which manifestly baffles our understandings. [See *Essay on Human Understanding*, Book II. Chap. xxiii. and Book IV. Chap. iii. See also his works, Vol. I. Page 557. 559, 560, 561. 572.] He allows, therefore, that it cannot be a reasonable foundation for rejecting a doctrine proposed to us, as of divine revelation, that we cannot comprehend the manner of it; especially, when it relates to the divine essence; and declares, concerning himself, "I gratefully receive and rejoice in the light of *divine revelation*, which sets me at rest in many things, the

manner of which my poor reason can by no means make out to me. I readily believe whatever God has declared, though my reason find difficulties in it, which it cannot master." [Ibid. p. 361. 573.]

Pyrrho said he had now done, and declared that he would not have dwelt so much upon the sentiments of such great men, if some learned and ingenious persons had not laid so much stress upon them.

Theophilus answered, when an argument is brought from the sentiments of some wise, great, and good man, whose authority we reverence and hardly dare oppose, the logicians call it *Argumentum ad veracundiam*, an address to our modesty. And one would not be very forward in directly contradicting or opposing men eminent for wisdom and piety. But yet this argument may be carried too far, and prevent all farther inquiries and improvements whatever. We justly reverence the names of men of piety and learning in former ages. But, you know, I have already declared that "their notions are nothing to us, any further than they are supported by *reason* and *Scripture*. We call no man master upon earth. We allow no man to *have dominion over our faith*. Churches and councils, fathers and moderns, learned men and celebrated divines have erred, and their determinations are not to be implicitly received."

The church of Rome says, "what, are you wiser than your fathers?" And they quote great names and many authorities. But Protestants do not much re-

gard such arguments against *Scripture* and *common sense*. And even Papists themselves are not much moved by such *fathers*, or authorities, as contradict their sentiments. Mr Boyle and Mr Locke were truly great and good men. But they were not infallible. I suppose, in some particulars, they were both mistaken. And persons, who in this point shelter themselves under their authority, would not in all points be determined by their opinions; or declare that they believe, in every particular, as those great men believed. And, if they had in this point been mistaken, or talked confusedly, it would not therefore be true, or more clear and evident, *that we can believe what we cannot understand*. I would, indeed, as soon be determined by their authority, as that of most men that can be named. But *Amicus Socrates, amicus Plato, sed magis amica est veritas*.

✓ All this I have said upon the supposition, that Mr Boyle or Mr Locke had differed from me, and said, *that we must believe things which we cannot understand*.

Whereas I do not apprehend, that they have said any such thing, or differ from me upon this head. They have neither of them said more than this, viz. that we must believe some things, which we cannot adequately comprehend, or that have properties and ways of operation, for which we cannot intelligibly account, or that there are some difficulties relating to them, which we cannot solve. Now, wherein does

this differ from what I have already said, unless in the manner of expression? Have I not said, that, "Where our ideas are clear, there our faith may be clear. Where our ideas are obscure or confused, there our faith must necessarily be obscure or confused. Where our ideas are adequate, there our faith may be adequate. Where our ideas are short, or partial, there our faith must be partial, or extend only to part of a thing. But where we have no ideas at all, there we can have no faith at all?"

I have likewise freely allowed, that we may understand or believe a thing, without understanding the mode or manner, relations and circumstances of it. But, where our ideas end, there our faith must end. And can you allege anything from Mr Boyle, or Mr Locke, that contradicts this? How often has Mr Locke, in particular, intimated that it is impossible to judge of, or assent to, anything without having some idea of it? And he concludes his *Chapter of Faith and Reason* thus; "To this crying up of *faith*, in opposition to *reason*, we may I think in a good measure ascribe those absurdities that fill almost all the religions, which possess and divide mankind. For men, having been principled with an opinion, that they must not consult *reason* in the things of *religion*, however apparently contradictory to common sense, and the very principles of all their knowledge, have let loose their fancies and natural superstition, and have been by them led in so strange opinions, and

extravagant practices in religion, that a considerate man cannot but stand amazed at their follies, and judge them so far from being acceptable to the great and wise God, that he cannot avoid thinking them ridiculous and offensive to a sober, good *man*. So that in effect *religion*, which should most distinguish us from beasts, and ought most peculiarly to elevate us, as rational creatures, above brutes, is that wherein men often appear most irrational, and more senseless than beasts themselves. *Credo, quia impossibile est, I believe, because it is impossible*, might in a good man pass for a sally of zeal, but would prove a very ill rule for men to choose their opinions or religion by."

From hence you plainly see, that this great and good man is on my side of the question, and has, in other words, asserted and defended what I am now contending for.

Pyrrho, with a smile, said, you will have things your own way. But let us not conclude the conversation upon this subject, till we have considered of what advantage it may be to mankind, to have this matter set in a clear light.

Theophilus was well pleased with that proposal. For he had a very great aversion to all dry and barren speculations, which may serve to amuse men, but cannot profit them.

I know, says he, some will look upon this as a dry and useless subject; but, to more judicious and considerate persons, it will appear to be a subject of vast extent and great usefulness.

Pyrrho asked, how that could be made to appear?

Theophilus answered, that requiring men, upon pain of damnation, to believe some things, which they cannot understand, was the ready way to unhinge, disturb, and perplex the minds of many weak, but honest and wellmeaning persons. God himself is no hard master. He never requires impossibilities, as the terms of salvation. Why then should men require such things, or represent God as requiring them? Why should they confound the understandings of the weak, who are easily imposed upon and led astray? All that God requires is, that men should assent according to evidence; make their faith a *reasonable service*; and be influenced by it to holiness of temper and life. The terms of acceptance are plain and easy, and the minds of good men ought not to be puzzled and confounded with dark, unintelligible, and incomprehensible speculations.

That indeed, said Pyrrho, seems to be a matter of some consequence. But what have you further to allege?

Theophilus replied, that the making men fancy they can believe what they cannot understand must be of bad consequence, as it leads them to enthusiasm, which is a most dangerous thing in religion. I own that "here the ravings of an enthusiast are on a level with the dictates of infinite wisdom, and nonsense is rendered most sacred; that here a contradiction is of great use to maintain a doctrine, which, when fairly

stated, is not defensible ; because, by talking backward and forward, by using obscure terms, and taking words in different senses, they may easily amuse and puzzle the people. On this foundation, *transubstantiation* is built, and most of those mysterious propositions, about which in former days men so frequently murdered each other."

The *rational Christian* first understands, then considers the evidence, and then believes. The *enthusiast* has a much quicker way, as he fancies, to come at *his faith*. He has inward feelings and divine impulses. He has knowledge and conviction darted into his mind all at once ; such clear knowledge, and strong, irresistible evidence, as satisfies himself ; but is insufficient to satisfy any other person, because it is incommunicable, and he cannot explain to another the nature and evidence of his faith ; what it is he believes, or why he assents to it. He has a strong persuasion, grounded upon the conceit of *inspiration*, without clearly understanding what he believes, or professes ; and without any rational or sufficient evidence on which to ground his assent. To what absurdities must such a person stand exposed ? He may believe *transubstantiation*, or anything else. For, as in the dark all colours are alike, so in his dark mind all the most wild and fanciful conceits, that can be named, may be entertained and zealously contended for, as the great and deep things of God, and the fundamental doctrines of religion. One absurdity,

firmly and tenaciously adhered to, makes way for a thousand. For, if you will be so obsequious as to profess your belief of one thing, which you do not understand, and for which you have no evidence, why not a second, and a third, and so on? When a man is got out of the reach of his own understanding, and into the dark labyrinths of error and enthusiasm; when he renounces his *reason* to follow *fancy*, appetite, or inclination, inward feelings, or imaginary impulses, he can have no ground for the soles of his feet to stand upon, but seems to be bewildered and gone beyond recovery.

Pyrrho observed that the man was in a bad way, who had gone that length, and that he heartily pitied him.

Ay, says Theophilus, he is to be pitied; and so are all they who live around him. For, when a man fancies that he can believe what he cannot understand, it leads him from enthusiasm into *bigotry* and *uncharitableness*. He is not to be argued with, and treated like a rational creature. Nor is he satisfied, that he may enjoy his own unreasonable, blind, and implicit faith; but his zeal hurries him on to make converts, and to persuade others to believe, or at least to talk, as he does; that is, without evidence, and without understanding. And, generally speaking, the more dark and unintelligible any points are, the more warmly and fiercely he contends for them. *Where the iron is blunt he puts to more strength to make it*

and wound, and destroy. The senseless and ridiculous doctrine of *transubstantiation* has occasioned shedding the blood of more Protestants, than all great and weighty matters of *the law* and of *the pel*.

When a man has reason and evidence for what he, he is ready to propose them; and that is the way to make converts among the sober and thoughtful part of mankind. For when you have convinced honest man's understanding, you may be sure of

But when a man holds ridiculous opinions, makes them fundamental articles of faith; if you r them, or even doubt, you are reprobate, or in dangerous state, and must be consigned over to lasting damnation; as if these zealous defenders of faith had got the keys of the bottomless pit giving to their girdles, and could open or shut the doors of the dark, infernal prison, at their pleasure. O blessed be God, pronounce it who will, *the curse* *less shall not come*. Those who love God, and understand and believe as well as they can, shall none of them be rejected by the righteous and equitable God of the universe, though they may have been mistaken in some points of opinion, and though their zealous neighbours should bestow their uncharitable censures upon them, load them with hard names, use them unkindly here, or consign them over to misery of the world to come.

Pyrrho observed that Theophilus painted strongly, and spoke with a becoming pathos, but hoped that he could not charge the contrary doctrine with many more bad consequences.

Yes, said Theophilus, I have two more, which I propose to mention, and then I will detain you no longer. The first is, that to contend for believing what we cannot understand is neither more nor less than contending for implicit faith, and greatly favors the church of Rome, that has frequently and in many places prohibited the free use of the Scriptures, taken away that key of knowledge, and neither entered into the true design and interpretation of those sacred writings herself, nor suffered those who were willing to enter in. She has styled ignorance *the mother of devotion*. Methinks I should be sorry to see any Protestants so far doing the work of Papists, as to take men off from a diligent and impartial inquiry into the grounds and reasons of their faith; or in the least to discourage the close and critical examination of the sacred writings; or the free, honest, and open profession of a man's sentiments after he has inquired. You know, Pyrrho, how warm and animated my zeal against Popery has always been, because I have ever looked upon it, not only as the greatest corruption of Christianity, but even a combination against reason and common sense, as well as against the rights and liberties of mankind. And, in proportion, I dislike all tendencies thereto.

Pyrrho could not imagine what the other bad consequence of implicit faith could be ; for Theophilus had already named more than had occurred to him, before the mention of them. But Theophilus put him out of his pain, and said that he had a tender concern for the wellmeaning part of Pyrrho's old friends, though he abhorred their principles.

What friends of mine do you mean, said Pyrrho, with some eagerness, for I do not yet understand you ? Theophilus let him know, that he designed those gentlemen, who are inclined to *infidelity* ; and that, as to all those who are men of integrity and good morals, he should be sorry to do anything to lead them to infidelity, or to establish them therein ; and that he could not but think, that to contend for believing what we cannot understand, was the way to tempt thinking men to infidelity. Not that the Bible itself pleads for such a faith, but the ridiculous notions, and groundless opinions and arguments of some Jews and Christians have furnished those, who have wrote against revelation, with their most formidable objections.

It is a pity, indeed, that such persons have not looked further, and examined the Scriptures themselves. But, on the other hand, the friends of revelation should be very careful not to lay stumbling blocks in the way of those, who are perhaps but too ready to be pleased, when they can find any advantage against their adversaries. However, if all the friends of revelation

had been of my sentiments, and as frankly declared their minds, neither Dr Tyndal, nor any of his brethren, could have flourished and triumphed on this head, as they have done.

Pyrrho thanked his friend for the pains he had taken in his behalf, and said, that by parting with what cannot be defended, and separating the chaff from the pure wheat, the friends of truth would be best able to satisfy their own minds, and to give the most thorough and lasting satisfaction unto all other attentive and well minded persons.

SELECTION
FROM THE WRITINGS
OF
THOMAS EMLYN.

THOMAS EMLYN.

Among the victims of religious persecution, few have been more conspicuous, or suffered with a purer or nobler mind, than the subject of the present memoir. His case is the more remarkable as belonging to a period, when the ignorance of barbarous times had retired before the opening day of truth and rational investigation, and as occurring in a country, where the protestant principles had already been made the foundation of the national church, and where it was the boast of the laws, that they protected the innocent, and secured the rights of conscience. An instance of persecution, even under circumstances like these, needs not be cited, it is true, to prove that fanaticism and bigotry heed not the voice of law, and are deaf to the eloquence of justice and reason ; the history of the church is black with the records of this fact, so dishonourable to the christian name and character ; yet there were incidents attending Mr Emlyn's case, which distinguished it from almost every other, and which, at the same time they illustrate the mischievous tendency of perverted sentiment and

hardened feeling, when moved by a pretended zeal for religion, show with what resignation a truly pious mind can submit to the reproach of a malevolent accusation, and sacrifice every worldly advantage for the stern integrity of religious principle. In this respect the example of Emlyn is full of good instruction, as manifesting the power of a religious faith established on the grounds of a sincere conviction, and its ascendancy in moral purity and strength over that, which looks for its support to traditionary symbols and the consent of the multitude.

THOMAS EMLYN was born on the 27th of May, 1663, at Stamford in Lincolnshire. His father resided on a small estate in that place, which he held in his own possession, and to the management of which he was devoted. As Thomas was the only son, early and assiduous care was given to his education. At ten years of age he was sent from home, and placed at a boarding school under the charge of Mr Boheme of Walcot, with whom he continued four years.

While at this school he attended service on the sabbath at the established church. But although his parents regularly attended that church, and were then intimately acquainted with Dr Richard Cumberland, afterwards bishop of Peterborough, yet they had a leaning to the puritans, and resolved to prepare their son for fixing his destiny as a clergyman among the dissenters. Nor was it with a wish to force his

inclination, or bias his sentiments, that they thus early pointed out his course for life ; it was rather in compliance with what they perceived to be the natural temper and tendency of his own mind. In the further prosecution of his studies he went to a private academy at Sulby in Northamptonshire. After residing at this place about twelve months, he made a journey to the university at Cambridge, where he was admitted into Emanuel college, at the age of sixteen. It does not appear, however, that he resided in Cambridge, for we immediately after find him again at Sulby, where he remained somewhat more than two years longer. With this institution he became dissatisfied, as not affording sufficient means of instruction to aid him in such studies as he wished to pursue, and as being deficient in the books and literary resources essential to the attainments, which his inquiring and active mind prompted him to make. In this situation he did not long deliberate, but put himself under the charge of Mr Doolittle at Islington, and accompanied that gentleman next to Clapham, and last of all to Battersea, at which place his academical education and preparatory theological studies were completed.

He now enjoyed privileges before unknown to him, both in the society and conversation of learned men, and in a free access to all kinds of books. It had never been his good fortune to be under an accomplished teacher, and even at this time his worthy instructor was more eminent for his diligence and fidel-

ity, than for the abundance of his knowledge, or the reach and resources of his mind ; but it was at last the happiness of Emlyn to be in a condition to supply this deficiency, by the force of application, and the means of information to which he could resort. Theology engaged his close and constant attention ; he applied himself to the study with an independent and resolute spirit, not restricted in the freedom of inquiry by the trammels of the schools, nor the dogmas and theorems of subtle divines. The religion of truth and of the heart was not in his opinion so difficult a thing, that it might not be understood. To the authority of others he paid no regard, any farther than it was borne out by the plain sense of the sacred Scriptures ; and to antiquity he yielded no reverence, except as it accorded with the same standard. He determined to study, consider, and judge by the light of his own mind. With these rules to guide him, it is not strange that he should deviate from the beaten track, though it does not appear that he was aware, till sometime afterwards, to what results his love of truth and liberty would lead him.

Having gone through with the usual course of preparatory studies, he began to preach in 1682, before he was twenty years old. A few months afterwards he was recommended to the countess of Donegal, who owned large estates in the north of Ireland, but was then residing in London. Emlyn entered her family as chaplain, and went over with her to Ireland in the

same capacity, when she returned the next year. The countess was married shortly after to Sir William Franklin, and the chaplain continued to hold his station in the family, where he was treated with great respect and kindness, and received a liberal allowance. So great was Sir William's esteem for him, that he offered him a valuable settlement in England, where he held an estate ; but motives of conscience obliged Emlyn to decline the proffered favour ; he was opposed to the principles and system of the established church, nor could any prospects of temporal aggrandisement induce him to conform to religious observances, which his sense of divine truth and duty could not approve. He remained in this family enjoying much leisure for study, as well as the benefit of enlightened society, till the year 1688, when the political troubles in the north of Ireland became somewhat alarming, and he returned to London.

To show that his refusing to accept a place in the established church was not occasioned by any narrow prejudice, or weak scrupulosity, it may be mentioned that, during his residence in Ireland, he had usually attended the service of an episcopal clergyman, and frequently officiated for him. This circumstance caused it to be rumoured, that he was coming over to the established church, but without any foundation ; for although the bishop had given him a license to preach, yet he did not subscribe the articles, nor conform to any of the usages peculiar to the estab-

lishment. He obtained the license, simply because it gave him a better opportunity for usefulness in a neighbourhood, where few dissenters could be found.

During the time of his residence in the north of Ireland, he was once in Dublin, where he preached with great acceptance to a dissenting congregation, whose associate pastors were Mr Joseph Boyse and Mr Williams. Just before his departure for London he received a letter from Mr Boyse, stating that his colleague had left his charge, and inquiring whether Mr Emlyn was inclined to accept an invitation to become his successor. This inquiry our author answered in the negative, intimating that concerns of some importance demanded his presence in England. The following is an extract from his letter to Mr Boyse. "As for the rumour with you of my being addicted wholly to the church, it is so far true, that I preached once every Lord's day publicly ; but you did very rightly understand me, that I had my license without ordination or subscription, for I had it without any condition, and I do not intend to take episcopal ordination, unless I could escape the subscription, or be reconciled to it, which I am not yet, nor think I shall be. But as for what concerns lay conformity with the church, I can safely dispense with it, and do not scruple to preach either in a church or meeting, both which I would make one church, notwithstanding little differences and corruptions, which I am not engaged in ; and, really, however I like the meetings in them-

selves, I should be loth to bring any people into sufferings by keeping them from church when necessity requires, though I know this takes no place at this time, nor will, I hope, hereafter. Though I know some would call this temporising, yet I know your charity and judgment will not admit that I mean so, but that it is what my judgment allows in point of conscience, not interest." These are truly christian sentiments, and bear equal testimony to the liberal and generous spirit, and the scriptural faith of their author. Were all christians to be like minded, and to respect as sincerely the judgment and faith of their brethren, the grounds of difference would be so much narrowed, as to be hardly worth contending for by any class, which might set itself up as a party.

In Mr Emlyn's way to London he preached at Liverpool, and several other places, sometimes in the church, and at others with the dissenters. At Liverpool several persons were desirous of settling him in a vacant church, but he declined their proposal for reasons above given. After remaining in London for a short period, he complied with the urgent request of Sir Robert Rich to officiate temporarily as minister of a dissenting congregation at Leostoff, in Suffolk, where the people solicited him to become their permanent pastor. This invitation he deemed it inexpedient to accept, because he was persuaded the place was not in all respects suited to him, and he was averse to forming any connexion of this nature, which looked

forward to the probability of a dissolution. This post he occupied about a year and a half, and, as in Ireland, so in England, he was on friendly terms with the episcopal clergy, uniting in acts of charity with those in his neighbourhood, and occasionally attending service in the church.

While at Leostoff an incident happened, to which may be traced the first spring of the future prominent events of his life. He became attached by a close and reciprocal friendship to Mr William Manning, a highly respectable dissenting minister in that vicinity. In love of knowledge, and an inquisitive, independent turn of mind, there was a strong resemblance between them, and it was their pleasure to pursue together certain subjects of inquiry, in which they both desired to be better informed. At this juncture appeared Dr Sherlock's work, entitled a *Vindication of the Trinity*, to which, from the celebrity of the author, and the interest then excited by the subject, their attention was earnestly drawn. Much to their surprise, however, they found the arguments of the learned author vastly less convincing than they had anticipated, and points, of which till then they had entertained no doubts, were now brought up before them clothed in mists and darkness, on perceiving with what ill success a powerful and zealous advocate had attempted to prove and defend them. In short, they were both driven to suspect the truth of the trinity, by reading Dr Sherlock's book in vindication of it.

They followed the subject into other channels, resorted to other authors, read the Scriptures, consulted creeds, but all in vain ; they could nowhere find satisfactory proofs of a trinity. What opinion Mr Emlyn formed at that time, or whether he formed any, is not certain ; he corresponded for several years with Mr Manning on the subject, but it was not till long afterwards, as will be seen, that he became professedly an Arian. He was deliberate and cautious, yielding only to the force of argument and serious conviction. Manning embraced the humanitarian system, but Emlyn always believed in the preexistence of our Saviour, and in the creation of the visible world through his agency.

He had not been two years at Leostoff, when he received another letter from Mr Boyse, pressing him to accept the invitation of the people to become his associate. With this renewed request he at length determined to comply, and went back to Dublin in May, 1691, where he was immediately settled as a colleague with Mr Boyse. In this station few events of his life for nearly ten years have been transmitted, any farther than that he was faithful in discharging the numerous duties of his office in a very large congregation, a popular, engaging, and practical preacher, abounding in the fruits of a pure benevolence and sincere piety, and adorned with the graces of an elevated, unsullied christian example. He was peculiarly earnest and happy in a style of impressive preaching.

with forcible and quickening appeals to the understanding and hearts of his hearers, seldom touching on abstruse doctrines, or unedifying speculations.

The following are his own words, as contained in a letter to his friend, Mr Manning. "I meddle not with any but practicals in preaching. I begin to think, that the greatest part of controversial divinity about the covenants, and the like, is much like the various philosophical hypotheses and theories, where men in the dark are pleased with their ingenious romances, and if they can maintain that so matters *may be*, they soon conclude *so they are and must be*, without authority, which in religion must not pass. There is nothing I more sincerely desire, than right knowledge of important truths ; and it is some satisfaction, that I am sure I am not biassed by interest or love of worldly esteem, and if one err unwillingly about the blessed Jesus, I should hope it may be pardoned, though it would sincerely grieve me to promote any such thing." These views he reduced to practice in the services of the sabbath, and in his religious intercourse with his parishioners, thus living most harmoniously with the people of his charge and his colleague, promoting the happiness of the former by spiritual counsels and a kind deportment, and soothing the cares of the latter not more by a participation of labours, than by a steady and devoted friendship.

But this scene was to be changed by one of the most remarkable proceedings, recorded in the history

of the church. Its cause is thus briefly narrated in the plain and expressive language of the author.

“I had been a preacher in Dublin for eleven years to a congregation of protestant dissenters, who were generally a sober and peaceable people, not unworthy of my love, nor had been wanting in any testimonies of affection and respect, that I could reasonably desire or expect from them.

“I own I had been unsettled in my notions from the time I read Dr Sherlock’s book on the Trinity, which sufficiently discovered how far many had gone back toward polytheism. I long tried what I could do with some Sabellian turns, making out a trinity of somewhats in one single mind. I found that by the tretheistical scheme of Dr Sherlock and Mr Howe, I best preserved the trinity, but I lost the unity. By the Sabellian scheme of modes, and subsistencies, and properties, I kept up the divine unity, but then I had lost a trinity, such as the Scripture discovers, so that I could never keep both in view at once. But after much serious thought, and study of the Scriptures, with many concerned addresses to the Father of lights, I found great reason first to doubt, and after by degrees to alter my judgment, in relation to former received opinions of the trinity, and the supreme deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. For though the word of God was my rule, I could not tell how to understand that rule but by the use of my reason, knowing well, that he who tells me, I must lay aside my reason

when I believe the Gospel, does plainly declare, that to *believe* is to act without reason, and that no rational man can be a Christian. I desired only to know *what* I must believe, and *why*. As to the latter I was satisfied, that divine revelation is sufficient ground of belief; but then I must conceive what it is that it reveals, and that I am explicitly to believe and profess; for a faith of sounds without meaning I understand not, and no more can believe airy sounds, than I can see them with my eyes. I could not imagine it should be necessary to say my prayers *with understanding*, and my creed *without it*; and could every whit as much edify by *worship*, as by *belief*, uttered in an unknown tongue. I did not make my reason the rule of my faith, but employed it to judge what was the meaning of that written rule or word of God; and thus was led to form notions different from what others had taught me, without regard either to Arius or Socinus, not agreeing wholly with either.

“Accordingly I was ever careful not to speak against my own judgment, or what should appear so to a judicious hearer, that I might not act against christian sincerity; and yet I never confronted the opinions of others by an express or unhandsome opposition. I doubted whether this was my duty, or was proper in the pulpit, where I could not have freedom to say all that was requisite in such a controversy; and whether I ought at once to cast myself out of my station of service, without a more particular and direct occasion

given me to profess my mind, which I did apprehend would offer, and which I was determined to accept when it did.”*

Such is the author’s frank and candid account of the state of his mind, and of the motives by which he prevailed on himself to practise a reserve on a subject, the discussion of which, under the circumstances then existing around him, would, he was persuaded, kindle strife, discord, and heart burnings, instead of adding strength to the bonds of peace, love, unity, and good fellowship. But this wise and judicious purpose of maintaining the spirit and reality of a right christian practice, at the expense of a private opinion on a point of doubtful speculation, was at length counteracted. In the year 1701, a member of Mr Emlyn’s congregation, after having listened eleven years with great delight and approbation to his preaching, began to suspect the orthodoxy of his creed, in regard to the common notions of the Trinity, and revealing his suspicion to Mr Boyse, it was agreed that they would call on him together, and make inquiry as to this particular. Mr Emlyn answered them with the utmost readiness, and explained his views at large, in which he professed it to be his faith, that God the Father is the only supreme God, and that the Son is subordinate and inferior, deriving all his excellence and authority from the Father. He added, at the same time, that, if the people were not satisfied with these

* Emlyn’s Works, fourth edition, vol. I. p. 15.

terms of his faith, and any ill feelings were likely to be created among them on this account, he was ready to resign his charge, and at all events was anxious to preserve peace and good will, whatever might be the sacrifice to him.

Mr Boyse would not listen to this suggestion, but insisted that the case ought first to be brought before the Dublin ministers, and their opinion ascertained. Emlyn, knowing from experience the narrow spirit and heated zeal of these men, and knowing also that they had really no concern in the affair, was not disposed to have them consulted, but wished the whole matter to be settled, according to the true principles of christian liberty, by a mutual agreement between the people and their pastor. To gratify his associate and friend, however, he yielded to his proposition, and met the ministers at the time appointed. The result proved but too truly, that he was not deceived in his presentiment of what he had to expect at the hands of his brethren, with whom he had been for many years on terms of strong and cordial intimacy. After a conference with him of two hours, without attempting to convince him of his error, or confute the arguments by which his faith was supported, without consulting his congregation or waiting for any formal complaint from them, and even without giving him notice of their intended proceedings, this self constituted assembly of ministers passed an order, that Mr Emlyn should no longer execute the office of a preacher.

At this crisis he called several of the leading members of his society together, explained to them what had happened, and recommended that, to avoid further difficulties and animosity, a separation should take place. To this proposal they were not willing to assent, but thought it preferable that he should desist from preaching for a season, till a longer space should be given to deliberate, and some mode of reconciling differences devised. To this plan, for good reasons, he declined acceding.

It was finally concluded, that he should make a journey to England ; but here another difficulty arose. The Dublin ministers seemed now to consider Mr Emlyn a sort of state prisoner, subject to their power and command. They assumed the liberty of consulting on his intended visit to England, and after suitable deliberation finally agreed, that he should be permitted to go, enjoining it on him, however, in a special charge, that " he should not preach anywhere." This decision was communicated to him by two of their numbers in person, and in allusion to it Mr Emlyn speaks thus in his *Narrative*. " To this imperious message, so full of affectation of authority, and expressive of rigid Presbyterian tyranny, which was yet attended by an Independent minister as one of the messengers, I answered to this effect ; ' I have no design to preach on the matters went, if that would satisfy them ; I presumed too much in forbidding me

no authority from them, nor owned any in them; that I had as much authority to forbid them to preach, as they to forbid me, and should pay no regard to them herein. Upon which they said they would then write to the London ministers about it. I bid them use their discretion, and I should use mine." In this spirited reply to the extraordinary presumption of the Dublin ministers, we find a perfect consistency in the principles and conduct of the author; he discovers himself to be a thorough advocate for liberty and justice, defending with equal pertinacity the rights and freedom of Christians, both in regulating the forms of church government, and in adopting modes of faith.

He went to England, but not to find peace, or escape the poison of slander and the arrows of persecution. His kindhearted brethren made the pulpits of Dublin resound with the cry of his apostacy, and the loud clamour of heretic and infidel became so familiar to the ear of the public, that even the wise and considerate were fain to believe what they so often heard repeated from the highest authority. The persons, who recommended his leaving the country, that his case might cause as little excitement as possible, were the first to proclaim it abroad, and call down indignation on its enormity. He had been absent but ten weeks, when he thought his presence in Dublin necessary, both that he might attend to the concerns of his family, and defend his character against the calumnies, which mistaken zeal and industrious malice had

scattered so freely. While in London he was received kindly by his brethren, notwithstanding the pains taken by the Dublin ministers to make him odious wherever he appeared. In the period of his absence he wrote a short account of his case, which he published, and which has been usually printed in his works as a sequel to his Narrative.

On his arrival in Dublin he was greatly afflicted at the conduct of those, who had for many years professed to be his friends, in whose intercourse he had enjoyed much, and from whom he felt that he deserved not bitterness and reproach. "I had not been of so unsocial a nature," says he, "as not to relish the society and love of my dear friends, nor was I insensible to the pangs of a violent separation; nor yet so mortified to the world, as not to feel some difference between contempt and respect; but still, my convictions of truth were so clear, that these things never staggered my resolutions of adhering to it, in the midst of all discouragements." This declaration speaks as much for the warmth of his feelings, as for the strength of his constancy, and it was nobly verified under circumstances of heavy trial.

As soon as Mr Emlyn found himself again in Dublin, learning the extent of the misrepresentations and false sentiments which prevailed concerning his religious opinions, he resolved to draw up and publish an ample exposition of his views. This resolution he executed in a treatise entitled *An Humble Inquiry*

into the Scripture Account of the Lord Jesus Christ. Hardly a copy of this work had gone abroad, when certain very zealous persons among the dissenters determined to have the author prosecuted. It was first contemplated to pursue the process of a presentment by the grand jury, but this was likely to be attended with so much delay, that it was abandoned. A special warrant was therefore obtained, and Mr Emlyn's rooms were entered by the keeper of Newgate, who seized him and several copies of his work, and took him before the Lord Chief Justice. Bail was at first refused, but it was finally received through the consent of the Attorney General, in the amount of eight hundred pounds for appearance at the time of trial.

When the expected time arrived, the case was not brought up, and he was bound over to another term. Even when this came round no further progress was made, than the finding a bill by the grand jury, in which an indictment of *blasphemy* was brought against the author. So rashly had this indictment been made out, however, and with so wanton and malignant a design, that it contained many expressions, which the author had never used. This was afterwards detected, and the bill thrown aside as defective, so that when the author appeared to take his trial, a new bill was to be made out, and the trial was put over to another term. Thus was he kept in suspense while his enemies were plotting his ruin, and devising means for carrying their purpose into effect under the artful

guise of a legal prosecution ; and thus was the arm of law turned aside from its appropriate task of protecting right, innocence, and virtue, to the disgraceful work of crushing a man, whose only offence was an open avowal of what he believed to be the true faith of the Gospel, and this in an English court of justice, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, in the age of Newton, Locke, and Clarke.

Four months after the prosecution, the trial came on before the Lord Chief Justice. There were also seated on the judges' bench six or seven bishops of the established church, among whom were the archbishops of Armaugh and of Dublin. The indictment set forth, that Thomas Emlyn "being wholly moved by the instigation of the devil," was guilty of "writing and causing to be printed a certain infamous and scandalous libel," in which "he impiously, blasphemously, falsely, and maliciously asserted," that Jesus was not the supreme God, nor equal to him, and that this libel was published "with intention to disturb the peace and tranquillity of the kingdom."* Emlyn soon found,

* The work referred to here is the *Humble Inquiry*, and the words quoted into the indictment, as the foundation of the charge of an "infamous and scandalous libel," were the following.

"I see no reason there will be to oppose those Unitarians, who think him to be a sufficient Saviour and Prince, though he be not the only Supreme God ; nor can any with reason attempt to prove him to be such, from his works and office as king of his church, since 'tis implied, that as such, he must do homage to God the Father, in delivering up his kingdom to him. And this very expression, *to God the Father*, makes it plain that there is no God the Son in the

that he had neither favour nor justice to expect from any quarter ; and, in fact, it had already been declared to him by a gentleman of the bar, that he would not be allowed to speak in his own behalf, and that there was a design “to run him down like a wolf without law or game.” The chief justice had been free in expressing his opinions ; and the jury was composed of persons from the illiterate classes of society, who had no knowledge of ecclesiastical subjects.

The first step in the trial was to prove that Mr Emlyn was the author of the book, in which the libel was said to be contained. No evidence of the fact appeared ; a printer made oath that he received one half sheet from him, but that he knew not who wrote it ; and Mr Boyse testified, that in the private conference with the ministers Mr Emlyn expressed sentiments similar to those contained in the book. On this testimony, which did not amount to a shadow of evidence, the Queen’s counsel raised an argument, which was urged with heat and vehemence ; and it was decided

same sense, or in the same supreme essence with the Father.—So then Jesus Christ in his highest capacity being inferior to the Father, how can he be the same God to which he is subject, or of the same rank and dignity ?—So that I may safely say thus much, that the blessed Jesus has declared himself not to be the Supreme God, or equal to the Father, as plainly as words could speak, or in brief express.” See Emlyn’s Narrative, in his Works, vol. I. p. 27.

These are all the passages, which were quoted to sustain the indictment for a libel and blasphemy.

that the evidence, although presumptive, was sufficiently to convict him. "This then was the method used against me," says Mr Emlyn, "first to prove what my opinions were from private discourses, at the instigation of friends, who treated with me on the foot of conscience and religion ; and in the next place to raise, or at least thence to strengthen the presumption, that I wrote the book, which was agreeable to such opinions ; and lastly to make this presumption serve the turn of full evidence ; and this in a case, where the charge was no less than wilful and malicious blasphemy and sedition ; and this too gathered only from speculative opinions."

As to the main point of the indictment, namely, whether what was written could justly be called blasphemy, the question was not discussed at all. Mr Emlyn desired much to speak on this point, and to show the extreme absurdity of the charge, on the ground both of law and the principles of christian faith and charity ; and particularly to make it appear, that if his language could be branded with blasphemy, the same imputation would rest on some of the greatest and best divines in every age of the church, those even who had been accounted in the fullest measure orthodox. But the Chief Justice refused to hear him on the subject, quoting a single precedent as the law in the case, and telling the jury at the close of his charge, that "if they acquitted him the lords bishops were there," thus intimidating them with the weight of authority

possessed by the persons, under whose inspection they were acting. The precedent adduced by the Chief Justice was one of a very flagrant character, in which the wicked intention of the person accused could not be doubted, and which was not in the remotest degree analogous to the case in hand, as being in no way concerned with religious faith or opinion. The worst construction, which Mr Emlyn's language could possibly admit, with any show of justice, would have been to call it heresy ; but then the prosecution must have been abandoned, as heresy was not cognisable as a crime at common law. And here it may be remarked, that the indictment designated the offence to be a *libel*, because no crime by the name of blasphemy was known in the English law ; hence the use of the phrase "blasphemous libel" in the indictment.

From what has been said, it is easy to imagine that the jury would return the verdict of *guilty*. Mr Emlyn was immediately committed to the common jail, where he remained till he was called up to receive sentence from the lord Chief Justice. It was ordered, that he should "suffer a year's imprisonment, pay a thousand pounds fine to the Queen, and lie in prison till paid ; and find security for good behaviour during life." This sentence was accompanied with the consoling assurance of the Chief Justice, that the pillory was the punishment which he deserved, but in consequence of his being a "man of letters," he had been treated with lenity. To carry the farce still further,

and expose the mockery of the whole proceeding, the Queen's counsel moved that he should retract, and thus escape the punishment. With this proposal, for a good reason, he would not comply, as his conscience bore him out in all he had done. This suggestion on the part of the counsel, however, proved the bare-faced injustice with which the whole affair had been conducted, for how was the nature of the offence to be changed in the eye of the law by retracting? When the sentence was passed, a piece of paper was fastened on his breast, and he was led round the rooms of the court, by way of making his disgrace the more conspicuous, and his affliction the more severe and cruel.

In speaking of himself Emlyn observes, "after sentence I was committed to the sheriffs of Dublin, and was a close prisoner for something more than a quarter of a year in the subsheriff's house; but upon complaint I was hastily hurried away to the common jail, where I lay among the prisoners in a close room, filled with six beds, for about five or six weeks; and then by a habeas corpus I was, upon my petition, removed into the Marshalsea for my health." As it was impossible for him to pay the fine demanded in his sentence, he remained here a prisoner for more than two years, visited by none of his former brethren among the clergy of Dublin, except Mr Boyse. This gentleman was always his friend, although by the popular voice and influence he was moved sometimes

to act with less discretion and firmness, than could have been desired.

Emlyn's friends in England and Ireland interceded to have his fine reduced ; at first there appeared no hope of success, but after a petition to the lord chancellor, he decided that "such exorbitant fines were against law," and the thousand pounds were in the end reduced to seventy, which sum was paid into the Queen's treasury. This was not all, however, for the archbishop of Dublin demanded in addition a shilling on the pound as the Queen's almoner, and he insisted that this amount should be paid on the *original fine*. He relaxed a little at last, after much altercation, and consented to take twenty pounds as a compromise for the whole. Emlyn was then released from prison, having given bonds for his good behaviour through life. This was on the 21st of July, 1705, and he went immediately to England, never again returning to the country where he had endured such unparalleled scenes of trial, suffering, and danger.

During his imprisonment he occupied himself with writing some of the pieces, which have since been published, and also in preaching on the sabbath in a large room, hired by him for the purpose. His audience consisted of such of the prisoners as were allowed to attend him, and a few persons of his former congregation, who were willing to brave the popular odium that they might profit by his instructions, and prove the affection with which they still regarded

their former spiritual guide, even in the midst of his bonds.

Arrived in London he was soon employed to preach to a small congregation collected for this object. To this service he was devoted several years, receiving very little compensation, till by death and other incidents the congregation was dissolved. His being suffered to preach in London gave offence to a few, who made extraordinary professions of orthodoxy, and a formal complaint was carried to Dr Tenison, archbishop of Canterbury. But he knew the character of Emlyn, and was too wise and too charitable to molest him, notwithstanding the lower house of convocation represented it to the Queen as a grievance, that "weekly sermons were preached in defence of the unitarian principles." Mr Charles Leslie attacked Emlyn in a public manner, and complained that he should be permitted to preach. A controversy on certain theological points was for a time kept up between them, in which our author was particularly successful in elucidating and defending his sentiments. Leslie had talents, but a slender stock of theological knowledge ; he had a furious zeal and dogmatical temper ; he was boisterous and sarcastic ; but he had little of the meekness of a christian, and less of those moral refinements of character so necessary in a fair and serious disputant.

Being thus retired from his ministerial charge, Emlyn preached no more except occasionally by invitation

to a Baptist society at Barbican. He lived cheerfully and contentedly in retirement, deriving a sufficient income from his small fortune to supply his wants, and make him independent of the world. On the death of the celebrated Mr Peirce of Exeter, about the year 1726, it was in agitation by the people of his society to ask Mr Emlyn to become his successor ; but when our author heard of this movement, he requested them not to proceed, as there were weighty reasons, considering his advancing age and infirm health, why it would not be expedient for him to accept their invitation.

He formed an intimate acquaintance with Dr Samuel Clarke, who, as soon as he learnt the purity and disinterestedness of his character, treated him with marked kindness, and as a most confidential friend. For many years he seldom undertook or meditated any important project, without consulting Mr Emlyn, and asking his advice. Our author has rendered a just and affectionate tribute for these acts of friendship and confidence, in a short memoir of Dr Clarke, in which he has explained and triumphantly defended some points in the character of this truly pious, great, and learned man, against the suspicions of jealousy, and the calumnies of open hostility. Among the great and the good, who adorned the age in which he lived, few can be placed on a higher eminence than Dr Clarke.

In the latter stages of his life, Emlyn felt severely the burden of declining years, but his mind continued vigorous, his spirit cheerful, and his religious affections lively and ardent. He wrote and studied, till this exercise became a weariness, and then his hours were passed, at the intervals of bodily pain, either in the conversation of friends, or in drawing materials for pious and grateful reflection from the inexhaustible resources of his own mind. He always spoke with the greatest satisfaction of the joy he felt in his religious opinions, and to his last hour praised God, that he had been pleased to open his mind to those truths, which the Saviour came into the world to reveal and publish for the good of man, and which he believed were the only true grounds of the sinner's hope. The last day of his life was serene and happy ; not one lingering desire clung to the world ; the hour had come and he was ready ; full of gratitude for the past, and of humble confidence in the future, he looked forward with an eye of faith, that brightened and caught new beams of joy, as the taper of life faded, decayed, and expired. His spirit departed on the 30th of May, 1741, in the seventy ninth year of his age.

The narrative of the persecutions suffered by this excellent man is not without its benefit, even in our age ; not that the recurrence of such a scene needs be apprehended ; but it is of eminent use for us to know the value of our religious privileges, and, what

is more, to be prepared to maintain them against the usurpation of power, and the lawless ravings of fanaticism ; for power will always usurp, bigotry will always rule with a tyrant's rod, and while the sun shall last and the stars shine in the firmament, fanaticism will burn, and blast, and destroy. The reviving spirit of human improvement will do something to temper the rage of false zeal, and make religion worthy of the God who gave, and of the rational beings who profess it. How much, indeed, has it not done since the trial of Emlyn ? Where is the dark corner of the civilised protestant world, in which such a blot on the face of society, such an insult to the majesty of law, and such violence to the rights of nature, would now be endured ? The spirit, however, which prompts to an outrage like this, is not easily extinguished ; when public sentiment makes it ashamed to appear in open day, and the stern sway of justice shortens the arm of its power, then it works in secret, it whispers of heresies that are abroad, and taints the passing breezes with the poison of slander. It is not changed in its nature, but only in the mode of its operation ; it does not imprison, gibbet, and burn the body ; it resorts to a different, but not less certain mode of ruining its victim ; it seeks to undermine reputation, and to fix a stigma on character, and to stamp honest opinion with crime, by sounding the trumpet of alarm with the loud, harsh, ominous notes of heresy, infidelity, and irreligion, in the ears of the credulous multitude, till

their minds are shocked at the fearful discord, and every good feeling is banished from the heart to make room for lurking suspicion, or to wake from their slumbers the devouring fires of passion.

Now under whatever forms this spirit, so hostile to truth, virtue, and religion, may show itself, whether it aims to devour the body and substance, or blast the character, it equally behooves every friend of the public good and of true christianity to be on his guard against it. When the Chief Justice sentenced Emlyn to imprisonment and fine for no other offence, than that of conscientious opinion, he represented to him the mercy of this sentence, by telling him, that if he had been in Portugal or Spain, his mildest punishment would have been burning. Persecution may always use this argument. Unhappily, examples will not be wanting to sanction any enormity. Let the examples be forgotten, or cast off as a reproach to the history of man ; let this presumption, which assumes authority over another's faith, be resisted, till it shall no longer have the power, if it have the will, to meddle, usurp, and oppress ; let every christian feel, that he has no dearer right than the liberty of conscience, and let him be at least as ready to show the purity of his faith, by the convincing argument of a good life, as by the tenacity with which he holds to the dark, intricate, and unintelligible dogmas of a long and ancient creed, woven in the web of a semibarbarous philosophy and perverted metaphysics, when

' For dubious meanings learn'd polemics strove,
And wars on faith prevented works of love ;
The brands of discord far around were hurl'd,
And holy wrath inflam'd a sinful world.'

Bishop Hoadly's remarks in reference to the case of Emlyn, written ten or twelve years after the event, may with propriety be quoted here. They are contained in his ironical Dedication to the Pope, which was prefixed to Sir Richard Steele's *Account of the State of the Roman Catholic Religion*. Hoadly tells the Pope, with what facility the protestants could manage to set up a prosecution of their brethren, who differ from them, notwithstanding they have abjured the authority exercised by his holiness' church in passing judgment on others in matters of faith ; and this, he adds, is not confined to the national church of England, but is equally the delight of dissenters, when a proper occasion offers. He then goes on to say,

" This hath been experienced, particularly in Ireland, by one who could not see exactly what they saw about the nature of Christ, before his appearance in the world. For, as with you, a man had better blaspheme Almighty God, than not magnify the blessed virgin, so with many of us, it is much more innocent and less hazardous to take from the glory of the Father, than of his Son. Nay, to bring down the Father to a level with his own Son is a commendable work, and the applauded labour of many learned men of leisure ; but to place the Son below his own Father

my degree of real perfection, this is an unpardonable error ; so unpardonable that all hands were set against that unhappy man ; and he found, at length, that he had much better have violated all God's commandments, than have interpreted some passages of Scripture differently from his brethren. The Nonconformists accused him, the Conformists damned him, the Secular Power was called in, the cause ended in an imprisonment and a very heavy fine ; two methods of conviction about which the Gospel is silent."*

The writings of Emlyn were collected and published in three volumes octavo, a fourth edition of which appeared in the year 1746. The first volume contains a memoir of the life of the author, written by John Emlyn, to which is added an appendix containing Emlyn's own narrative of the proceedings against him at Dublin. In this volume are also found

Humble Inquiry, five other Tracts chiefly of a controversial nature in reply to Mr Boyse, Dr Waterland, Dr Sherlock, Dr Willis, and others, and also a Treatise on Baptism. In the second volume are the Remarks on Leslie's writings against Unitarians, an Inquiry into the authenticity of the celebrated text of

See the whole of this ingenious Dedication in the first volume of the present Collection of Essays and Tracts, p. 255. In the life of Emlyn, prefixed to his works, this Dedication is ascribed to Sir Richard Steele ; but this is a mistake, the cause of which may be corrected by consulting the volume here referred to, p. 247.

the three heavenly witnesses in John, together with an answer to Mr Martin's dissertation on this subject, and also four other tracts, and a brief memoir of the life and sentiments of Dr Samuel Clarke. The third volume is composed wholly of sermons.

The *Humble Inquiry*, selected for publication in the present work, is a fair specimen of Mr Emlyn's mode of thinking, his powers of reasoning, and style of composition. To explain and convince is in every part the obvious purpose of the author, and his main effort is to come to the argument with the fewest words, and by the shortest course. A clearer exposition of his opinions, and a more natural and connected chain of reasoning to support them, could not well be imagined.

His examination of Leslie's dialogue relating to the *Satisfaction of Jesus Christ*, is one of the best treatises on this subject, which has been written. The difficulties of the satisfaction scheme are set forth in their proper dimensions, and pressed with a powerful weight of argument drawn from the nature of rewards and punishments, the Scriptures, and the character of the Supreme Being.

The *Inquiry into the Original Authority of the Text*, 1 John v. 7, concerning the three heavenly witnesses, is a performance of very great merit, considering the time in which it was produced. It was among the first which appeared on that side of the question, for although Sir Isaac Newton's great argu-

ment had been written, and sent in manuscript to Le Clerc in Holland some time before, yet it was not known to the public till nearly thirty years afterwards. Emlyn proves himself thoroughly master of the subject, as far as the means of knowledge were then within his reach, and although he does not discover the same profound logic as Sir Isaac Newton, nor the same astonishing compass of learning and exuberance of wit as the gigantic Porson in his reply to Travis, yet he selects and combines his materials with a skilful hand, and reasons closely and conclusively. Mr Martin, minister of the French church at Utrecht, wrote in defence of the Text, and a controversy ensued between him and Mr Emlyn.

The *Sermons* of our author are chiefly remarkable for their plainness of style, vigour of thought and expression, clearness of method, directness of manner, and their strictly practical tendency. One sermon in the volume, entitled *Funeral Consolations*, written immediately after the death of his wife in Dublin, has been often commended as one of the rarest examples of this species of composition in the language, showing the happy union of deep feeling at a most afflictive loss, with the calm resignation of a firm and pious mind to the will of Providence.

The other tracts in these volumes are of more or less value, according to the subjects on which they treat. Some of them had a temporary object, and consequently a temporary interest ; but there are very

few from which instruction may not be derived student in theology at the present day. It was the author's fortune to be driven into controversy, never lost his temper, nor descended to recrimination; his retorts were not pointed with sarcasm, nor pleasantry with malice; his victory was that of merit; his triumph was the conviction of an erring mind, resolved to defend itself against the assailed hardenings of injustice, and in all seasons to be the wearied champion of truth, right, liberty, and religion.

AN
HUMBLE INQUIRY
INTO THE SCRIPTURE ACCOUNT
OF
JESUS CHRIST ;
OR

A SHORT ARGUMENT CONCERNING HIS DEITY AND
GLORY ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL.

CHAPTER I.

SECTION I.

*The Term God is used in Scripture in different
Senses, supreme and subordinate.*

THAT the blessed Jesus has the title of God ascribed sometimes to him in the holy Scriptures, is not denied by Arians or Socinians ; but it remains to be examined in what sense that character, as given to him, is intended. Nor is this an unreasonable or needless inquiry, since it is beyond all reasonable denial, that the title of God is given in very different senses in the Scripture.

1. Sometimes it signifies the most High, Perfect, and Infinite Being, who is of himself alone, and owes neither his being nor authority, nor anything to an-

other ; and this is what is most commonly intended, when we speak of God in ordinary discourse, and in prayer and praise ; we mean it of God in the most eminent sense.

2. At other times it has a lower sense, and is made the character of persons who are invested with subordinate authority and power from that supreme Being. Psalm xcvi. 7. Thus Angels are styled Gods, Psalm viii. 5. “Thou hast made him a little lower than the Gods,” as it is in the margin. So magistrates are Gods, Exod. xxii. 28. Psalm lxxxii. 1. John x. 34, 35. And sometimes in the singular number, one person is styled God, as Moses is twice so called, a God to Aaron, and afterwards a God to Pharaoh ; Exod. iv. 16 ; vii. 1 ; and thus the devil is called the God of this world, that is, the prince and mighty ruler of it ; though by unjust usurpation, and God’s permission. Now as he who alone is God, in the former sense, is infinitely above all these ; so we find him distinguished from all others, who are called God, by this character, viz. *a God of Gods*, or the chief of all Gods, with whom none of those Gods may be compared.* So Philo describes him to be not only the *God of men*, but the *God of Gods* also. This is the highest and most glorious epithet given him in the Old Testament, when it is designed to make a most magnificent mention of his peerless greatness and glory. Equivalent

* Origen. Com. in John. p. 46—49. Duet. x. 17. Jos. xxii. 22. Ps. lxxxvi. 8 ; cxxxv. 5.

to this, I take that title to be, which is so much used in the New Testament, viz. *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God of our Lord Jesus, the Father of glory*. For since Jesus Christ is the chief of all subordinate powers, *the Prince of the kings of the earth*, and far above the greatest angels; *the Lord of Lords, and King of Kings*; he who is styled *the God of our Lord Jesus Christ* is therein, in effect, styled *the God of Gods*, or above *all Gods*. Eph. i. 3, 17. Rev. i. 5. Eph. i. 21.

Now the question to be resolved is, in which of these two senses Christ is said to be God in the holy Scriptures? The bare character of God determines nothing in this case, because it belongs both to the *supreme* and to *subordinate* beings in power and authority; but the question is, whether Jesus Christ be "*the God of Gods*," or above all gods?

He is indeed the *Lord of Lords*; but that denotes an inferior character, compared with that of *God of Gods*, as appears by 1 Cor. viii. 5, though it be included in the superior; so that he who is above *all Gods*, is also over *all Lords*, but not contrariwise.*

* To this purpose are the words of that eminent philosopher Sir Isaac Newton in his Optics, p. 314, 315. Lat. Edit. "The word Deity imports exercise of dominion over subordinate beings, and though the word God most frequently signifies Lord, yet every Lord is not a God. The exercise of dominion in a spiritual being constitutes a God; if that dominion be real, that being is a real God; if it be fictitious, a false God; if it be supreme, the supreme God." He might have added, if subordinate, a subordinate God.

In short, has Jesus Christ any God over him, who has greater authority, and greater ability than himself, or not? This will decide the matter; for if he have a *God above him*, then^{*} is he not the *absolutely supreme God*, though in relation to created beings he may be a God (or Ruler) over all[†].

SECTION II.

Our Lord Jesus Christ speaks of Another as God, distinct from Himself, and owns this God to be above or over Him.

NOR can we more clearly demonstrate this point, than by showing; First, that Jesus Christ expressly speaks of *another God* than himself; Secondly, that he owns this God to be *above or over himself*; Lastly, that he wants those supereminent and infinite perfections, which belong only to the *Lord God of Gods*. Of these I shall treat in a manner suited to vulgar capacities; for I judge it very unfit to speak or write of important articles, (which the common people must believe, and must so far understand,) in such a manner as leaves them wholly unintelligible.

[†] Is not he alone the one God, who knows no superior, no cause of his existence, whom the Son himself teaches us to esteem *the only true God*, and confesses to be *greater than himself*, even *his God*? Euseb. de Eccles. Theol. l. 1. c. 11. See also Irenæus, l. 3. c. 18. who frequently distinguishes the Father by this character, *The God over whom there is no other God*.

First, Our Lord Jesus Christ expressly speaks of *another* God distinct from himself. Several times we find him saying, "My God," of another, Mat. xxvii. 46. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" So John xx. 17. Sure he intended not to say, Myself, Myself, why hast thou forsaken me? This God then was distinct from himself, as he declares in other places; John vii. 17. "He shall know my doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." So John viii. 42, where it is to be noted, that he does not distinguish himself from him, as the *Father*, but as *God*; and, therefore, in all just construction, he cannot be supposed to be that selfsame God, from whom he distinguishes, and to whom he opposeth himself. How manifestly are the *one God* and the *one Lord* distinguished, 1 Cor. viii. 6? And that there may be no just pretence to say with Placcæus, that *the God* and *the Lord*, or the cause of which all things are, and the cause *by* or through which they are, are but two things said of the same one God; we may see them more clearly distinguished, Eph. iv. 5, 6, where, by the interposing other things between the one Lord, and one God, viz. *one faith, one baptism*, it appears evidently, that these were not intended as two characters of the same being. I think that none, who impartially attends to the Scripture history, can doubt whether God, and his Christ, are not two distinct beings.

Secondly, Our Lord Jesus owns, not only *another* than himself to be God, but also that *he is above* or over himself, which is plainly intimated also by his Apostles. Himself loudly proclaims his subjection to the Father in many instances ; in general he declares his “ Father to be greater *than he* ;” he says, he came not in his *own*, but in his *Father’s* name or authority ; that he sought not his *own*, but *God’s* glory, nor made his *own* will, but *God’s*, his rule ; John xiv. 28 ; x. 29 ; John v. 43, and in such a posture of subjection “ he came down from heaven ” into this earth ; John vi. 38, so that it should seem, that nature which did pre-exist, did not possess the supreme will, even before it was incarnate. Again, he owns his dependence upon his God and Father, even from those things which it is pretended belong to him as God, viz. the power of working miracles, of raising the dead, of executing universal judgment ; of all which he says, “ Of my own self I can do nothing.” John v. 19, 20. 26, 27. 30. In like manner his Apostles declare his subjection to another, not only *as his Father*, but *as his God* ; which is emphatically expressed, in calling the most blessed God, “ the God of our Lord Jesus,” after his humiliation was over, Eph. i. 17 ; and the “ head of Christ is God,” 1 Cor. xi. 3. They declare his headship over the universe, and the very foundations of his claim to honour and service, to be owing to the gracious *gift* of God, Phil. ii. 9, ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ ; and yet these are some of the highest glories of Jesus Christ.

Let me only add under this head that great text, so full of irresistible evidence for proving an inferiority in the Son to his Father, or to God, 1 Cor. xv. from verse 24 to 29, where the Apostle says several things to this purpose.

1. That all things are to be "put under Christ's feet;" all enemies and powers are to be subdued to him, but adds, that it is manifest *God must be excepted* out of these things, that are under him; and that for this reason, because *it is he who did put all under him*. And how comes it to pass, that it is so evident a thing, that *another* must be supposed to be the great author of this triumph of Christ? Why might it not be done by himself independently, if the supreme God? And then there needs have been no exception of any *one Being* out of the all things under him. But the Apostle knew that Jesus Christ must needs triumph by a power derived from God, to whom it was most eminently to be ascribed; and then to one who had such thoughts, it was manifest that there must be one excepted from the all things under him, because he must needs be above Christ, who enables him to subdue all things, or *makes him a God over all*.

2. The Son shall "deliver up his kingdom to God, even the Father," that is, not to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as some pretend, but to the Father only; since it was the Father who "gave him all power in heaven and earth," and who made him

"King in Zion." Matth. xxviii 18. Psal. cx. 1 and 2. Ephes. i. 22. Heb. ii. 8. Into his hands he will make a surrender of all, in testimony of his having done all in a subordination to him; and having acted and ruled in a dependence on him, who shall have a satisfactory account of all given to him in the end. This is a glory peculiar to the Father as supreme.

3. "Then the Son himself shall be subject to him that put all things under him," that is, to God his Father, that "God may be all in all;" that is, his subjection shall be then manifested by an open solemn acknowledgment of it, when he shall recognise the supremacy of the Father in that public act of surrender; so that though formerly, (*in the present state,*) all judgment and rule was committed to the Son; yet then it shall be otherwise, and God will more immediately appear in the government of the future state, which shall not be so much shared, probably between him and the Redeemer, as the present administration appears to be. This then will be the issue of all our disputes; *God all in all*, and the *Son himself subject under him*. Can anything be more expressive of an inequality between God and Christ?

But it will be said by some, that by the Son here is meant the Son of Man, or Christ as Man; while as God he shall not be subjected to the Father.

Answer. As there is no intimation of any such distinction between the pretended two natures of the *Son here*; so there is enough in the words to shew,

that they are spoken of him, under his highest capacity and character, insomuch, that Monsieur Claude maintains it to be true of the Son of God, as to his (supposed) divine nature. But though there is no need of supposing such a nature, which I think the text plainly contradicts, yet his reasons will hold so far, as to prove the words do speak of Christ, under the highest character he bears, by the name of Son. For, first, as he says, it is not said the *Son of Man* but *the Son* absolutely, which he thinks in the Scripture use is wont to mean more than the Son of man; and undoubtedly it imports all that comes under that title; nay more, it is said *even the Son himself*, with great emphasis; that is, as great and glorious as he is with all his grandeur and power, he *himself* shall be subject. Secondly, his subjection being opposed to his reign, both must be understood of the same subject; be sure the delivering up the kingdom can only be done by the same to which it was committed, and by which it was managed. Now I shall allow, that only in his human nature, Christ could give up his kingdom; but then it is because it is as man delegated, and inhabited by God, that he sways and manages this kingdom.

And if this be allowed, as I think it needs must, that the Man Christ is sufficient, by help from God, to manage his universal spiritual kingdom, I see no reason there will be to oppose those Unitarians, who think him to be a sufficient Saviour and Prince,

though he be not the only supreme God; nor can any, with reason, attempt to prove him to be such, from his works and office as king of his church, since it is implied, that as such he must do homage to God the Father, in *delivering up his kingdom to him*. And this very expression, *to God the Father*, makes it plain, that there is no God the Son in the same sense, or in the same supreme essence with the Father; because, if there were, then he ought not to be excluded from his glory of having such open homage paid to him, which is here appropriated to the Father only. And since the Apostle speaks of the same God, (whom he explains to be *the Father*,) to the end of this discourse, and says he shall be *all in all*, how evidently does he shew him to be far beyond all that are *not* God the Father, whatever character else they bear? So then, Jesus Christ, in his highest capacity, being inferior to the Father, how can he be the same God, to which he is subject, or of the same rank and dignity?

Thus it appears that Christ is *so* God, as to be under a *superior* God, who has set him over all. And suitable to this is that account, which the Scripture gives us of the Godhead of the blessed Jesus, viz. because he is invested with a godlike authority and power from the supreme God his Father. Thus, when he was accused by the captious Jews for assuming the character of the Son of God, John x. 35, 36, which they perversely would stretch, as though it implied an

equality with God, he explains in what sense only he justified it, viz. *as one whom the Father had sanctified*, that is, called to a greater office, and honoured with a higher commission than those magistrates, on whom the Scripture so freely bestows the title of Gods. So when he is called God, it is explained in what sense, or of what sort of God. Heb. i. 8, 9. It is to be understood, by saying, that *his* God, (intimating that he had a God over him,) had *anointed him with oil*, &c. that is, had invested him with royal power and dignity, (as kings were installed in their office, by anointing with oil, among the Jews,) which is an explication of his Godhead or dominion. And this is said to be *above his fellows*, not sure above the Father and Holy Spirit, (which only are pretended to be *his fellows*, as God, by them who understand it of the supreme Godhead,) but above all other subordinate powers. This is one plain scripture account of his being called God, for these things are spoken to him, and of him, under the character of God; "O God, thy throne," &c. I think men should be well assured on what grounds they go, before they assign other reasons of this character, so different from the Scripture account. Let it suffice us, that God hath "made him both Lord and Christ;" Acts ii. 36. that he has "exalted him to be a Prince and Saviour." Acts v. 31.

However, our adversaries will gain nothing by alleging texts to prove the title of God to be given to Christ, since that may be; and yet it will not prove

him to be *the supreme independent God*, but only one, who is inhabited, and commissioned, and enabled by him who is so. As to that place, which is corruptly rendered in our translation, "he thought it no robbery to be equal with God;" Phil. ii. 6. it is confessed by our adversaries themselves, that it should be read thus, viz. that he did not *assume*, or arrogate, or snatch at an equality with God, or covet to appear in the *likeness* of God;* the words are never known to be used in any other sense, as is shewn by Dr Tillotson in his Discourses against the Socinians; also by Dr Whitby in his exposition on that place; and others.† So that this rather denies than asserts Christ's equality to God, though he was in the *form of God*, as that notes the outward *resemblance* of him in his mighty power and works, which is the constant meaning of the word *form* in the New Testament.

But because some think such perfections are in Scripture ascribed to Christ, as will prove him to be

* One reason, why I think, what we render, *to be equal with God*, may be translated *to be like God*, is, that the word *ἴσος* admits degrees of comparison, *ἰστέρος, ἰστέριος*. Now a strict arithmetical equality consists in an exact point; and no things can be more or less *equal*, than what exactly are so; but things may be more or less *alike*; and therefore though things that be alike, may be equal, yet they are not hereby proved, or expressed to be so. See Dr Whitby *in locum*, who instances in several places, where the word *ἴσος* is so used. T. E.

† Dr Bennet's New Theory, cap. 7. Dr Marshal's Sermon on this text.

God in the highest sense, I proceed to show in the next place,

Thirdly, That our blessed Lord Jesus disclaims those infinite perfections which belong only to the *supreme God of Gods*. And it is most certain, that if he want one, or any of these perfections, that are essential to the Deity, he is not God in the chief sense; and if we find him disclaiming the *one*, he cannot challenge the *other*; for to deny himself to have all divine perfections, or to deny himself to be the infinite God, is the same thing.

CHAPTER II.

SECTION I.

Our Lord Jesus disclaims those infinite Perfections which belong only to the Supreme God. 1. Underived Power. 2. Absolute Goodness. 3. Unlimited Knowledge.

FIRST, One great and peculiar perfection of the Deity is absolute, underived *omnipotence*; he, who cannot work all miracles, and do whatever he list of *himself*, without help from *another*, can never be the supreme Being, or God; because he appears to be a defective being, comparatively, since he needs help, and can receive additional strength from another than himself.

Now it is most evident, that our Lord Jesus, whatever power he had, confesses again and again, that he had not infinite power of himself. "Of myself I can do nothing." John v. 30. He had been speaking of great miracles, viz. raising the dead, and executing all judgment; but all along takes care men should know that his *sufficiency* for these things was of God the Father. In the beginning of the discourse, he says, "The Son can do nothing but what he sees the Father do;" John v. 19. So in the middle, "The Father has given to the Son to have life in himself"; ver. 26, 27. And as if he could never too much inculcate this great truth, he adds towards the conclusion, "I can do nothing of myself," *απ' ἐμαυτοῦ*; or, from nothing that is my *self* do I draw this power and authority. Sure, this is not the voice of God, but of a man! For the Most High can receive from none; he cannot be made more mighty, or wise, because to absolute perfection can be no addition. Rom. xi. 35. And since power in God is an essential perfection; it follows, that if it be derived, then so is the essence or being itself; which is blasphemy against the Most High, for it is to *ungod* him; to number him among dependent derivative beings; whilst the supreme God *indeed* is only he, who is the *first cause*, and absolute original of all.

Nay, further, our Lord considers himself here in opposition to his Father; who, he says, gave him all power. Now if he had such an *eternal* divine *Word*,

united more nearly to him than the Father, surely he would have owned his power to be from that *Word* or divine *Son*.

How comes he to ascribe nothing to that, since it is supposed to be equal in power to the Father himself, and more nearly allied to Jesus Christ, as the operating principle in him? "My Father in me does the works;" John xiv. 10, by which it is evident there was no divine agent in and with him, but the Father; he only has all power of himself, and needs no assistance.

Secondly; another infinite perfection, that must needs be in the Deity, is supreme *absolute goodness*. All nations have consented to this, by the light of nature; that *Τ' ἀγαθόν*, and *optimus maximus*, are the prime characters of the *Supreme*; as the orator says, he is one, *quo nec melius, nec majus concipi potest*; the fullest, and highest of all that are called good; for indeed all other good is derived from him.

Now the Lord Jesus expressly disclaims this character. "Jesus said to him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God;" Matt. xix. 17, where it is most evident that he distinguishes himself from God, as not the *same* with him, and denies of himself what he affirms of God;* and as to that divine perfection of supreme infinite *goodness*, he challenges the man for presuming to say what seemed to attribute

* Iren. l. i. c. 20. Orig. Com. in locum.

it to him, and leads him off to another, who and who *only* was more eminently so.

It is astonishing to see what violence is offered to the sacred text, by such as maintain the equality of Jesus Christ to God his Father. What a strange fetch is it, to suppose our Lord's meaning to be this? "I know, man, thou dost not take me for God, as I am; why then dost thou give me the title belonging to him only?" when there is not one word in the context looking this way; for Christ never challenges the poor man with this, that he thought too *meanly* of him, as they suppose, but quite contrary, that he thought or spake too *highly* of him. And verily if the man's error lay in this, that he thought too meanly of Christ, whilst his words otherwise were justly enough applied to him; I cannot think our Lord would have rebuked him in that manner; for instead of keeping him still to the right object, and rectifying his apprehensions about it, which only were wrong, he seems clearly to carry him off to another from *himself*, as not the right object, without rectifying his thoughts of Christ at all. And to what end could Christ reprove him in such a way, as never tells him what was his fault, but rather tempts him to run into another, and leads him out of the way?

It should seem rather, if any such notion had been then conceived by any, that the man did think him to be God; for if he thought him to be the *supreme good*, that was to make him God in his eye; and if he did

not intend so much, but only meant it of an *inferior good*, how could Christ rebuke him for it, since that was no fault or error? And truly they, who say Christ's receiving *worship* when on earth proves his deity, can hardly give an account why the man should give, or Christ receive worship from him, as he did, Mark x. 17, if he did not take him for God. However, whatsoever the man thought, he says what Jesus Christ thought was only proper to be said of God, and too much to be said of himself, as the obvious sense of his words declares.

And let me add, that if our Lord Jesus had on purpose left the matter disguised, not willing to discover who he was then; yet it is strange that the Evangelists, who many years after relate the matter, when it was *necessary* to have it believed that Christ was supreme God, as it is pretended; that they, I say, should not unriddle the matter, by inserting some cautious clause, as that this he said to prove him, or because he knew he denied his Godhead, or the like; for sometimes on less occasions they enter such cautions, John vi. 6. xxi. 23. And yet though three of the Evangelists relate this discourse, they all do it the same way, and not one of them says a tittle to direct us to this secret way of interpretation, but leaves us to the hazard of a most fatal mistake, even recommended to us by his history, if Jesus Christ were indeed the supreme Good in as high a sense as God his Father, which he

so apparently here denies, and by that denies himself to be the most high God.

Thirdly ; I will only add one perfection more, viz. absolute *Omniscience*, or unlimited knowledge of all things, past, present, and to come, Ps. cxlvii. 5. " His understanding is infinite." So Isa. xli. 23. Acts xv. 18. " Known to God are all his works from the beginning."

Now, it is plain our Lord Jesus Christ had not this infinite knowledge, particularly not of future things, such as the day of judgment. Mark xiii. 32, he says, " Of that day knows no man, no, not the Angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only." Here the Son professes his knowledge to be *limited*, and inferior to the Father's, that is, the Son of the Father, or Son of God ; the Son as *above* angels in knowledge, the Son in the most *eminent* sense.* Now how is it possible the Son can be God infinite, and yet have but a finite understanding ? Or can he be equal in knowledge to the Father, and yet not know as much as the Father ? And be sure if he was not an infinite God, when on earth, he cannot be such afterwards. Thus we have seen Christ himself, with his own mouth disclaiming infinite original *power*, *goodness*, and *knowledge* to belong to him, but he attributes them to his Father *only* as another, distinct from himself, from whom he derived of each in a dependent limited manner.

* Irenæus, l. ii. c. 28.

SECTION II.

The Weakness and Absurdity of the Common Evasion from the Distinction of two Natures.

What can be said against these plain arguments ? I imagine our opposers have but one shift left for the evading them, and that is a distinction, which serves them in all cases ; for they say, Jesus Christ speaks these things of himself, as *man only*, while he had another nature as God, which he reserved, and excepted out of the case. So that when he says, *I cannot do thus myself*, or *I am not* to be called the *chief good*, or *do not know this*, &c. according to *them*, the meaning is, I have not these perfections in my *human nature* ; but yet I know and can do all unassisted, and am the chief good in my *divine nature*, which also is more properly myself. The vanity of which subterfuge I intend now to lay open, by shewing how absurdly this distinction of the two natures is pretended, to take off the force of such expressions from Christ's own mouth, which in their natural and undisguised appearance do proclaim his inferiority to God, even the Father. And I shall dwell the more upon this, because it is the most popular and common evasion, and comes in at every turn, when all other relief fails.

It would be no unreasonable demand to ask, what intimation of any such *distinction of two natures* they can point us to, in any of these discourses of Christ ? Why should men devise or imagine for him such a strange, and seemingly deceitful way of speaking from

no ground, nor necessity, other than that of upholding their own precarious opinion? But I have several remarks to make upon this common answer.

1. That which in the first place I have to object against it is, that our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, if *himself* was the supreme God in any nature of his *own*, could not have said such things, as I conceive, in any consistency with truth and sincerity, (which he always maintained strictly,) he could not say himself *could not do*, or *did not know* the thing, which all this while *himself could do*, and *did know* very well, as be sure if he was the supreme God, he could and did; for this were to make him say what is most false, and to equivocate in the most deceitful manner; for though we should suppose he consisted of two infinitely distant natures, and so had two capacities of knowledge, &c. yet since *himself* includes them both, it follows, that the denying a thing of himself in absolute terms, without any limitation in the words or other obvious circumstances, does plainly imply a denial of its belonging to any part of his person, or any nature in it. For though we may affirm a thing of a person, which belongs only to a part of him; as I may properly say a man is wounded or hurt, though it be only in one member, suppose an arm; yet I cannot justly *deny* a thing of him which belongs only to one part, because it belongs not to another; as I cannot say a man is not wounded, because though one arm be shot or wounded, yet the other is whole.

For instance, I have two organs of sight, two eyes. Now suppose I converse with a man with one eye shut and the other open; if being asked whether I saw him, I should dare to say I saw him not, without any limitation, meaning to myself, that I saw him not with the eye which was shut, though still I saw him well enough with the eye which was open; I fear I should bear the reproach of a liar and deceiver, notwithstanding such a mental reservation as some would attribute to the Holy Jesus. For knowledge is the eye of the person; Jesus Christ is supposed to have two of these knowing capacities; the one weak, the other strong and piercing, that discerns all things. Mat. xxiv. 3. Now as such an one, the disciples repair to him and ask him, when the end of the world and time of his coming shall be? He answers them, by giving them some general account of the matter, but says that the particular *day and hour* he knew not, nor did any know but the Father, meaning, say my opposers, that he knew it not with his *human* knowledge, though he knew it well enough with his *divine*, at the same time that he said, *the Son knows it not*, absolutely and indefinitely.

And yet if Jesus Christ had a divine knowledge and nature, no doubt his disciples, who, if any body, must be supposed to believe it, directed the question to that, rather than to the imperfect human capacity; and yet in answer to it he says, he *knew not the day*, which would not be counted sincerity or truth in men,

much less was Jesus Christ in danger of it; in his mouth *no guile was*; let us not impute it to him.

That you may see this is fair reasoning, hear how some of the other side own it, when out of the heat of this controversy. See Dr Stillingfleet's sermon on Mat. x. 16, speaking of the equivocations of Popish priests, whose common answer, when examined about what they have known by confession, is, that they *know it not*, which they think to vindicate from the charge of lying by saying, that "in confession, the priest knows matters as God, not as man, and therefore he denies to know them, meaning it as man." But, says the Doctor, this is absurd; because to say he does not know, is as much as to say he doth not *any way know*. Now if this be a good answer against the Papists, as no doubt it is; then sure it is so in the present case. Therefore, when Christ says he knows not the day of judgment, it is as much as to say he does not *any way* know it, and consequently, it is a vain shift to say, it was as man only. We must beware lest we bring the holy Jesus under such a reproach for equivocation, as the Romish priests lie under; and make the Jesuits themselves think they have a good title to that name, by imitating herein his example, which in this very instance they allege with so great advantage, according to this interpretation.

2. As a farther evidence, that Jesus Christ intended no such distinction of two natures, as is pretended; it is to be observed, that he puts not the distinction,

or opposition between the Son of Man, and the eternal *Word*, as some speak, but between the *Son* and *his Father*, Mark xiii. 32 ; “ Not the Son knows, but only the Father ;” by which it is plain, he had no thought of including any person or nature of his own among the excepted ; for whatever was not the Father, he says was ignorant of that day. Now it is certain, that in *no nature* was the Son the Father ; and consequently where none but the Father knows, none, who is *not* the Father, can be intended ; and since our Lord was making an exception in the case, he would not have forgotten to except the eternal *Word* too, if there had been such a divine principle in himself, equal to the Father and distinct from him ; for it is a known rule, that an exception from a general assertion confirms it, as to other instances not excepted.

Will they say, that by the Father is meant all three persons here, viz. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ? What, can the Father as opposed to the Son, be put for the Father and the Son ? What woful work will this make with Scripture, to suppose that what are opposed to each other do include each other, under the very characters by which they are opposed ? As well may they say, that in the baptismal form, by the Father is meant, Father, Son, and Spirit, though he be distinguished from the other two. And I should despair of ever understanding the Scriptures above all books that ever were written, at this rate of interpre-

tation. No doubt, therefore, but the Father, as opposed to the Son, excludes all that is the Son; and then there could be no Son of God that knew of that day which only the Father knew of, and consequently no Son that is God equal to the Father.

3. Moreover, that interpretation must needs be unjust, which, if admitted, will make all, even the most plain speech, *uncertain*, and utterly insignificant; as this interpretation of Christ's words would do. For as I ask the patrons of this opinion, in what words Jesus Christ could in brief have denied himself to be God most high, if he had a mind to do it, more plain and full than these, in which he says, he knew not all things as the Father did, nor could do all things? So I would fain have them shew me, what words of that nature he could have used, which the same way of interpretation, as they here use, will not evade and make insignificant? For had he said, or sworn in plain words thus, viz. "I tell you I am not the supreme God, and none but my Father has that glory"; they would upon the same reason still have said, this was to be understood of him as *man* only. So that no words professing himself *not* to be God, could be a proof of it, if this way of interpretation be allowed. I may therefore safely say thus much, that the blessed Jesus has declared himself *not* to be the supreme God, or equal to the Father, as plainly as words could speak, or in brief express; and that this declaration made by him already, is not to be evaded any other

way, than what will make it impossible his mind should be understood by any words he could have designedly used in the matter. Let any one try if this do not hold true ; and sure it must be an absurd way of interpretation, which leaves a man no opportunity or power of speaking his meaning plainly, so as to be understood.

4. Again, this way of interpretation, which the advocates of the opinion I oppose are so much necessitated to for upholding their cause, does plainly overthrow it again, and may be turned against themselves; for if it be just and true to deny of Christ absolutely what belongs to him in one nature, because there is another nature in which it belongs not to him ; then, since to be the chief God belongs to him, according to our adversaries, only in *one nature*, and not in respect of the other, or human nature, it follows that it may as justly be said Jesus Christ is not God, nor to be worshipped or trusted as such ; nay, that he was not before the Virgin Mary, according to them, and the like ; and this without adding any limitation or restriction, any more than our Lord does in the place mentioned.

What would they say to one who should speak or preach so, "That Jesus is not God, that he cannot do all things, nor is equal to the Father ?" Would they not conclude he was a denier of the deity of Christ, else he would never speak so unguardedly ? Upon the

same account, when Jesus Christ himself says, that he cannot of *himself* do all things, nor know all things, and makes no reserves in his words, we may conclude he also denies his being supreme God ; else, if it be a just way of speaking in him, it cannot be unjust in us to imitate him, by denying him indefinitely to be, what he in any one nature is not, that is, that he is *not God*, without adding more.

Nay, after this way of speaking, which they attribute to Christ, a man may be taught to say his creed backward, and yet make a true profession of his faith, by denying of Jesus Christ in absolute expressions, whatever may be denied of one of his natures. Thus since the Apostles' Creed takes notice of nothing to be believed concerning Christ, but what belongs to his *manhood*, (which is strange, if there were any articles relating to his supreme deity, which must be most important,) one may venture to deny them all, with this *secret* unexpressed reserve, viz. meaning it of the divine nature, (to which they belong not.) So that one may say, I believe that Jesus Christ was not conceived of the Holy Ghost, or born of the virgin Mary ; I believe that he never was crucified under Pontius Pilate, nor was dead or buried ; that he never rose nor ascended, nor will return visibly again ; for his divine nature, which it is pretended he had, was not capable of these things. And since they say, the personality is divine, here seems more warrant to be *bolder* in denying indefinitely of the person what be-

longs not to the divine nature, whose the *personality* is, than in so denying of the person what only belongs not to the human nature ; as this interpretation makes Christ to do.

5. Finally, it weighs something with me, in opposition to this way of interpretation, that the Evangelists never take any occasion, when they had so many, to subjoin any caution against taking Christ's words in their obvious sense, when he says, "he did not know the hour," and the like. If, as we said, our Lord had no mind to reveal his divinity, though I see not still why he should deny it thus, yet sure his Apostles, who wrote so many years after, whom it concerned to reveal all important truths most clearly, would not fail to have set the reader right, by removing such obvious objections as these are against the supreme deity of Christ ; and saying, he spake this only in respect of his *manhood*, *that he knew not all things*, &c. John ii. 21 ; xi. 13. But here is not one caution given, as often we find there was about less matters. No doubt it was because they would have the thing understood as it fairly lies, not thinking of any such secret reserve in Christ, of a divine nature in his person, to be tacitly excepted, when he had denied such perfections of his person indefinitely.

Thus it remains good, that Jesus Christ disclaims infinite perfections to belong to him as to the Father ; and therefore that he is not the same infinite God with him, if we can believe his own words. But before I

conclude this argument, I shall endeavour to answer what our opposers offer on the contrary side. They say there is abundant evidence from other Scriptures, that Jesus Christ has those perfections in him, which I have shewed in the forementioned places he denies of himself. These they lay in balance to the other; and since both sides cannot be proved, it must be examined, which ought to yield. Particularly they say, omniscience is ascribed to Jesus Christ, even such as is peculiar to the supreme God; and since this indeed is that infinite perfection, which they seem to allege the most plausible testimonies for its belonging to him, therefore I choose to single out this in particular. I think I have made good the negative already from his own mouth, that he did not know all things; nor can any thing of equal evidence and force be produced for the affirmative, as will appear upon considerate examination.

CHAPTER III.

SECTION I.

Answer to Objections founded on some indeterminate Expressions in Scripture. 1. Such as speak generally of Christ's knowing all Things. 2. Such as speak of his knowing Men's Thoughts and Hearts in Particular.

THE instances usually alleged to prove the infinite omniscience of Jesus Christ, are either, 1. Such as

speaking of his knowing all things in general; or, 2. Of his knowing men's thoughts and hearts in particular. To both which I reply.

First, it is objected, that the disciples ascribe to him the knowledge of all things, as John xvi. 30; xxi. 17. "Thou knowest all things." I answer, that as those expressions are words of admiration from the disciples *not yet inspired*; so they are intended only to express a very great and comprehensive knowledge, far from infinite divine omniscience; as appears,

1. By Christ's own words; he knew not what the Father knew, viz. the particular time of the day of judgment.

2. In that it was common to ascribe all knowledge to men of extraordinary wisdom, especially when any intended to commend them highly, and were affected with wonder; for admiration and praise naturally incline to run out into hyperboles. Thus the woman of Tekoah, under a surprising wonder at David's sagacity, cries out, "My Lord knows all things on earth, and is as wise as an angel." 2 Sam. xiv. 20. And the Apostle, in commendation of some Christians says "They know all things." 1 John ii. 20. 27. And yet it is plain such encomiums must have their limitations. And indeed the Jews seem to have thought their prophets knew in a manner *all things*; thus, when a woman of ill fame anointed our Lord's head, the Pharisee says of him, "If this man were a prophet, he

would know what manner of woman this is." Luke vii. 39. And when the woman of Samaria found that he told her of all her secret acts, that ever she did, she concludes thus, "Sir, I perceive thou art a prophet." John iv. 19. It is no wonder then if the disciples speak thus of him, "Thou knowest all things," without esteeming him more than the greatest of prophets.

3. It is evident they never intended more, by attributing *all knowledge* to him, from their own words in one of the texts mentioned, John xvi. 30, where the disciples tell us, how much they inferred from his great knowledge, (which they describe and extol, by saying, *Thou knowest all things*,) not that he was God, but one sent of God, "By this we believe that thou camest forth from God;" not that thou thyself art that God. So that, by these large expressions, they only intend to attribute to him what a created being is, by divine assistance, capable of; and therefore it is violence to their words, to infer from them, that Jesus Christ is God, when themselves infer no such thing, who best knew their own meaning.

And yet if it were granted that our Lord Jesus knows all things, that is, which actually are; yet if he knows not all *futurities* too, which himself denies, he comes short of infinite omniscience. For ought I know, a finite being may have a knowledge commensurate to this poor earth, which is but a *dust of the balance*; and yet not know all God's secret pur-

poses, or the seasons, which the Father keeps in his own hand, Acts i. 7.

Secondly, It is objected, that the knowledge of the heart is ascribed to Christ, John ii. 25. Mat. ix. 9, but especially Rev. ii. 23. And this they say is what belongs to God only, as Solomon judges, 1 Kings viii. 39, and God claims it as his eminent glory, Jer. xvii. 10, and yet Jesus Christ says, "I am he who searches the heart;" therefore, say they, surely he must be that God, *who only knows the hearts of all the children of men*. I take this to be the strongest instance, that can be produced from the sacred text, for proving any infinite divine perfections to belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, and it shall be seriously considered.

In answer hereto, I shall shew two things. 1. In what sense the searching and knowing the heart is made peculiar to God, and incommunicable to others, by those texts. 2. That notwithstanding it be peculiar to him in some sense; yet these acts may, in another sense, be justly attributed to another, and performed by him who is not the most High God.

1. As to the former, though Solomon says, "Thou, Lord, only knowest the hearts of all men;" yet, what if I say, it is no wonder that Solomon should not know of any other to whom that excellency was communicated, since this mystery of the unsearchable riches and fulness of Christ, and of God's being manifest in his flesh, and his high exalt-

ation of him, was hidden in the ages past, and only manifested in the times of the Gospel? For it is in these latter times that our Lord Jesus has obtained his great authority and dignity, for which he has received answerable abilities. Yet, I add, such expressions in Scripture, appropriating some perfections to God, do only import that God has *no equal* herein, or that there is an *eminent* sense only in which such perfections are peculiar to God, and incommunicable to all others; though still in a lower sense something of them may be communicated by him to others.

And this shall be seen to be no forced supposition, but according to the current strain of plain Scripture, in a multitude of instances. Thus it is said, that "God only is wise," Rom. xvi. 27. 1 Tim. i. 17. So Ch. vi. 16. "God only has immortality." So "thou only art holy," Rev. xv. 4. And yet there are wise and holy men, and immortal holy angels and spirits. But the meaning of those appropriate expressions is, that the blessed God is wise, and holy, and immortal, in a more excellent way, and higher sense than all others, and in which sense others cannot be so. So when it is said, God only knows the hearts of men, it must be interpreted the same way, viz. That there is none can know the heart as God does, so universally, so immediately and independently; and yet it is no contradiction to say, that he enables another to do it in great measure under him. And as he would argue but very weakly, who should

go about to prove an angel to be God, from this, that he is called holy and wise, which are said to belong to God only ; even so in the same manner must they argue, who would prove Jesus Christ to be the supreme God from his knowing men's hearts, because it is said to belong to God only ; except they can shew that Jesus Christ knows in the same excellent independent manner and degree as his father, and that he is no more beholden to him for ability and assistance, than he is to his son Jesus Christ. So I might argue from Isa. xlv. 9, that God only knows *futurities*, and yet how often have the prophets foretold them from him ?

And it is not hard to suppose, that as holiness and wisdom, so to know the thoughts and hearts of men, hath been communicated to Prophets and Apostles. Was there not something of this, if not in the Prophet Elisha's telling the secret counsels of the Syrian king, 2 Kings vi. 12, yet at least in the *spirit of discerning* mentioned 1 Cor. xii. 10, and in the case of Ananias and Sapphira ? Acts v. I grant this was by divine assistance of the Spirit of God, and by Revelation. Neither is our Lord Jesus Christ ashamed to own, that his knowledge is sometimes owing to "revelation from God his Father," Rev. i. 1. If any should ask, how Jesus Christ comes to know all that he reveals in those seven Epistles to the seven Churches, the very *first* words of that book of the revelations may be an answer ; "It was the Revelation which God

gave to Jesus Christ," &c. No wonder, then, that he says, he knows their works, their hearts, and their approaching judgments and trials, when his own vast abilities are assisted by God's revelation.

But it will be said, that his *searching the heart* imports it to be his own act. *Answer.* So it may very well be; for whatever a man knows, he knows it by his own act. And why may not the mind search, and yet be under the light of revelation, and the influence of superior assistance? But yet after all, these words of *searching the heart* are only an expression, that denotes the accuracy of his knowledge, not the manner of attaining to it; for, taken properly, as applied to God, it is dishonourable to say, he is put to make a search, since all things are naked and open to his view. And if they must be taken *strictly* and properly, as applied to Christ, then they belong not to him in the same sense, as they do to God, and so can be no argument of his being that God. Which leads me to shew,

2. That there is no absurdity in attributing this knowledge of the heart to Jesus Christ, though he be not the most high God. That he knows things with some limitation as to the *degree*, and in dependence on his Father as to the *manner*, appears by what has been said already. And, therefore, the knowledge of the heart attributed to him, must be such as is consistent with his subordination to the Father's greater knowledge.

It is pleaded, that it is not possible for a finite being to have such universal knowledge of the hearts and ways of men, as is ascribed to Jesus Christ, and which, as head and ruler of the church and world, he ought to have, and therefore he is infinite God.

Answer. I am pretty sure it can never be demonstrated, that it exceeds a finite capacity to know the concerns of all on this earth, when the enlarged understanding is assisted in the highest manner by divine influence and revelation. The reason is, because the object is finite ; and I challenge any man to shew me, how it can be impossible for a finite capacity to comprehend a finite object, as this world is, and would be, though it were ten thousand times greater than it is? I am satisfied this can never be demonstrated to imply any contradiction in it ; and that all such imaginations concerning it proceed chiefly from too high a conceit of man, and too low apprehension of the infinite God ; as if the distance between these two were so small, that there could not be one made of a capacity so much above men, as to be commensurate to them all, but presently he must be the most high God ; as though that supreme Being could not produce one, who should be a thousand times beyond all this earth and its inhabitants, and yet be infinitely below himself. Methinks, if the sun was but an intelligent creature, and could diffuse his intellectual influences as he does his natural, could but see and understand with his beams and secret influences, it is easy to imagine what

a penetrating and comprehensive knowledge he might have ; but we may entertain much greater thoughts of the *Sun of Righteousness*, Jesus Christ.

And I conceive a strong argument to prove Jesus Christ, as man, capable of such deep and extensive knowledge, may be drawn from the offices of dignity and power conferred on him by God. For God has "given to him to be head over all things." Eph. i. 22. "He has given or committed to him all judgment ;" and that as the "Son of man." Joh. v. 22. 27. In short, his kingly office, by which he rules over all the world, and takes special care of all his members, as it necessarily supposes his knowledge of the whole estate of his church, and every member of it, as far as is necessary for the discharge of that trust ; so I think it undeniably proves this large knowledge to be exercised by him as man, however he gains it.

For since this office and power is given, it cannot terminate in the divine nature ; for who can *give* to God any dignity or power, who has all *originally* in his own being ? It must then be given to the *man*, or human nature only. And if the *man* Christ Jesus sustains this office, and be invested with this kingly power, even with all power in heaven and earth ; then *as man* we cannot deny him to be suitably qualified for it with all requisite abilities, lest we reproach *God*, as calling one to an employment, who is not fitted for it, or himself in assuming a trust, which he is not able to discharge. Besides, unless his human nature can

execute this power, it cannot be said to be given to it ; for a power, which cannot be exerted, or is impossible to be executed, is not given nor received, any more than a commission, or grant to a stock or a tree, to bear rule, not over the other trees, as in Jotham's apologue, but over a nation, or to command an army. It is no gift at all, if this were the case, that the *man* Christ Jesus be utterly incapable of the office and government lodged in him.

If it be said, that though the office and delegated authority be committed to the *human*, yet it is only executed by the *divine* nature in Christ ; I answer, it is most unreasonable to suppose this trust committed to the *man* Christ, who must at last deliver it up ; and yet the management of it belongs only to another being. How can he be commended for being "faithful over the house of God, to him who appointed or constituted him," when it is not expected he should execute his office ? I grant, indeed, that his *kingly office* is executed by the assistance of God, as he exerts his divine power and wisdom through the human nature of Christ, and communicates of them in *all fulness* to him, in whom it dwells ; but to say, that the man Christ does not exercise his kingly universal power, but that his divine nature, (supposing it,) does solely and immediately execute the office given to him as *man* or mediator, (for to God can nothing be given,) is, in my mind, a most gross absurdity ; for it is to say, that God officiates for man, in execution of a de-

legated or subordinate authority ; or that he acts under the authority, and in the name of a creature, which is not meet to be said of the supreme God. It remains, therefore, that as Christ's universal kingdom and headship is by gift from God, of which only the man Christ is the receiver, committed as a *trust* to him, so he certainly wants no ability to execute the trust in the *nature* entrusted with it ; I say, no ability, whether of power or knowledge, sufficient to render him a careful, vigorous, and every way most effectual *head* of his body, and ruler of the world ; and to deny this, is to rob him of his greatest glory.

Besides, what benefit or *gift* is it to the man Christ, that the divine nature should execute a power which it *always* had, and could exercise without any gift to him ? What reward, or what addition was this to him ?

Another argument may be drawn from that comfortable ground of confidence in a Christian's address to God, which the Scripture lays down, viz. the sympathising compassion of our Lord Jesus Christ towards his distressed servants, arising from his own sufferings when on earth, " Seeing we have not an high priest, who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted as we are ; let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace." Heb. iv. 15, 16. Christ's having been tried with sufferings makes him a more compassionate earnest advocate for us ; and this is our comfort.

Now it is certain, this compassion arising from his own experience of trouble, can belong to none but his human nature ; the divine nature is compassionate, not for this reason, *because* it was tempted or grieved with misery. No, it was only the man Christ suffered, and consequently feels a sympathy from hence with his distressed servants. And it is most certain, that if he sympathises with them in their troubles, he must then know them in *that nature* which only has a fellow feeling of them ; for none can sympathise with the miseries of others, which he knows not of. So that they, who deny Christ's human nature to be capable of the knowledge of all our miseries, do, in effect, deny him to be such a compassionate advocate as the Scripture represents him, and rob us of this strong ground of consolation and hope in our approaches to God, which the Apostle would have us to build on.

And this doctrine has been so far from appearing either impossible or absurd to the reason of mankind, that I might produce the consent of a very great number of learned men, even among them who oppose my other opinions. The Lutherans allow the man Christ a sort of universal knowledge, as well as universal presence, which they plead for. The schoolmen, both Thomists and Scotists, allow him universal knowledge, though they differ in their way of explaining it.

And there was a time in the sixth century, when in the christian church some were branded with Heresy, under the name of Agnoetæ, who held Christ was ig-

divine worship given ultimately to him in Scripture, but on the contrary, that all the honour it assigns to him is such as speaks him to be inferior to the Father, and dependent on him; since it is wholly grounded upon what God his father has graciously *bestowed* on him. Thus he requires baptism, if that be an act of immediate proper worship, *in his name*, because *all power* in heaven and earth was *given to him*. Thus we must honour the Son as (truly, not as greatly as) we honour the Father; because the "Father hath committed, or given, all judgment to him." John v. 22, 23. Thus at "the name of Jesus must every knee bow, and every tongue confess him to be Lord;" Phil. ii. 10, 11, because as a reward of his obedience, the Father "hath given him a name above every name;" and it is added, that all this homage is ultimately to the "glory of the Father." Worship, which is thus grounded upon *derived* and borrowed excellency, is not supremely divine, and cannot be offered to the infinite, selforiginate, independent Deity, without a great affront, because it is not the most excellent. Mal. i. 14. To praise an independent God for honour and power granted to him by another, supposes a falsehood, and mingles reproaches with praise.

So that however there may be the same common external acts or words, such as bowing the knee, and saying *glory and praise*, used to God and the Mediator; as also in some instances, they are given in common to ordinary men; yet the mind of a rational

worshipper will make a distinction in his inward intention, as no doubt but those devout Jews did, who in the same act "*bowed their heads, and worshipped both God and the King.*" 1 Chron. xxix. 20. But I shall not pursue this any farther at present.

Moreover, I judge, that to assert Jesus Christ to be the supreme God subverts the Gospel doctrine of his mediation; for if I must have one, who is supreme God and man, for my mediator with God, then, when I address to Jesus Christ as the supreme God, where is the God-man that must be my mediator with him? To say he mediates with *himself*, is the same as to say, that I must go to him without a mediator; and turns the whole business of mediation into a metaphor, contrary to the common sense of things, as well as against the Scripture. And I would gladly know what is the notion of going to God without a mediator, if this be all, that he mediates with himself? Who ever doubted the exercise of his own wisdom or mercy, that these do in a sort plead in him? But sure the Scriptures speak of a mediator without him, when they set forth Jesus Christ as such; and who is this mediator, when we go to Jesus Christ as the ultimate object? If it be said his human nature only acts in this mediation, though as united to the divine; I answer, that as this is still to make Christ mediator with *himself*, so the human nature is not God-man; and if the man, or human nature alone be capable of doing the part of a mediator, then it is not necessary that

Jesus Christ should be more than a man inhabited by, and related to God, in order to that office. Nor may it be said, that the union to the divine nature gives an *infinite efficacy* to those acts, of which the human only is the principal ; for unless by that union, the human nature was turned into an infinite or divine nature, its acts can no more be reckoned properly and intrinsically infinite in this case, than his body or human understanding are infinite, because so united to an infinite nature.

But what fully demonstrates, that the human nature of Christ can never be an effectual mediator, according to them, no, not though it were personally united to the divine, is this, viz. That they deny this human nature so united, to have the knowledge of the secret mental prayers, the inward desires and distresses of all Christians, or to know any one's heart. And how then can he be a compassionate intercessor in cases that he knows nothing of? Or how can he have a fellow feeling of their sufferings, which he knows not that they feel at all? What comfort is there in this account of Christ's mediation? The divine nature is precluded from it, because they direct us to seek to that as the ultimate object through a mediator ; and the human nature, they say, may know nothing of our case, nor knows our hearts, whether we worship sincerely, or repent sincerely, or hypocritically only ; and so knows not how to represent or recommend us to God. What a case now do these men bring us into?

There is no mediator left to interpose with the supreme God ; so that we must deal with him immediately and alone, which they will own is far from the Gospel doctrine or method. Thus is the Lord Jesus turned out of his office, on a pretence of giving him a higher honour. So that upon the whole, as far as I see, we had even as good be content with the Apostle's fair and plain account of this matter ; if its being so very intelligible may not be an unpardonable objection against it, viz. That "there is but one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." 1 Tim. ii. 5. Never let us fear, but St Paul knew how to describe the Mediator, without leaving out the better half of him, or the principal nature. Our Mediator, according to him, was only called a "man ;" who also is by office a God, or ruler over all, made so by him who puts all things under him.

And indeed as there are two principal distinguishing doctrines of Christianity, relating to the unity of the supreme God, and the one Mediator with him ; so the Trinitarians have lost them both among their several parties. For as they are divided into two principal parties, besides several subdivisions, both among Conformists and Dissenters, one part holding *three* real persons, or *infinite Beings*, the other but *one* ; (for they are not yet agreed whether they worship *three* infinite supreme beings, or but *one*,) so between them both, these two great doctrines are

subverted ; the Realists leave room for a Mediator in the Godhead, but they destroy the unity of God, who is one infinite Being ; on the other hand, they who hold true to the divine unity, or one infinite Being under *three modes*, or properties, or relations, do, by plain consequence, leave no place for such a Mediator as they require, viz. one who is an infinite God, to be a mediator with the infinite God, when there is no other infinite Being but his own, and he cannot be thought to intercede with himself neither. So that to keep the Gospel faith whole and undefiled, it is necessary that we avoid both these rocks, by believing God and his Christ to be two beings, that so there may be room for one to mediate with the other ; and that these two are not two equal or supreme beings, but one subordinate to the other, that so we may preserve the unity of the supreme God.

Let us then bethink ourselves seriously, not what the church in latter days has thought of Jesus Christ, but what his own Apostles, when inspired, have thought of him. Methinks none was more likely, or ever had a fairer occasion to represent his Lord in the height of his glory, than the Apostle Peter in the day of Pentecost ; that day of triumph, with the newly and visibly inspired Apostles. Hear how magnificently he describes his glorious Lord Jesus before his murderers. “Ye men of Israel hear these words, Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, wonders, and signs, which God did by him

in the midst of you." Acts ii. 22. Again, "Let all the House of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." Acts ii. 36. Now it is observable, the Apostle was aiming at such a description of Jesus Christ, as might strike the hearts of his murderers with the greatest horror of their crime; and therefore could never omit the most emphatical branch of his description, viz. his infinite Deity, if he had really been such.

What a terrifying argument had that been to beget conviction in his persecutors beyond all the rest, to tell them, they had shed the blood of the infinite God himself? It is certainly all flat and low that St Peter says in comparison of this, viz. "That he was a man approved of God." Did he not understand, or would he betray his cause by such an omission? And yet he only represents Christ as a God by inhabitation and exaltation, when he was far from being daunted with any fear to own Christ fully. Nay, if this deity of Christ were a fundamental article of the Christian faith, how comes it to pass, that when poor convinced souls, in anguish for their crimes, seek direction how to be saved from them, the Apostle should not acquaint them with this article, but directs them to believe in *this Jesus*, such as he had described him? Acts ii. 37. Did he direct wounded souls to an insufficient Saviour, without telling them, he was the infinite God? Yet they are baptised and added to

the church, and numbered among such as shall be saved. How can this be, if the supreme Godhead of Christ be a fundamental article of the Christian faith? So Acts x. 38. "God was with him." This was all.

SECTION III.

The Writers against the Unitarians unsay their own Arguments against the Papists.

To conclude, God and Christ, (or one anointed,) are two *disparates*, or different things, as much as Christ's body and bread are, and therefore cannot be predicated one of the other, in a proper sense, or without a figure, as all our writers against the Romish transubstantiation argue; and it is of equal force in the present case. *To be anointed*, imports to be raised by authority and honour conferred; it is in effect to say, the person is a creature, or inferior being; and therefore to say, that properly Christ is most high God, is to say, the inferior is supreme, and the man is God; which cannot be, otherwise than by a figure, as the bread is Christ's body, viz. *by relation, &c.* And truly if the business can be salved here, by making a personal union between God and Christ, I see not why the Papists may not set up such another union between Christ's body and the bread in the eucharist, and then they may stoutly defend that it is *the body* of Christ properly. But, indeed, nothing is

more obvious than the unsteadiness of many Protestant writers, when they write against the Papists and the Unitarians. How do they go backwards and forwards? And when they have triumphantly and fully beaten off the vain assaults and objections of the Papists, they take up their baffled arguments, and urge them the same way, as others did against them, against the Unitarians; and what they have maintained against the former, as good argument, notwithstanding Romish evasions, these arguments they oppose, when the Unitarians turn them against themselves, in the point of the Trinity; and they betake themselves to like shifts and evasions.

Thus let the Papists object to them the novelty of the Protestant religion, and ask them where was their religion and church before Luther? They think it a weak cavil, and can tell them their religion was in the Bible, and their church among the primitive christians, however it lay hid in the time of common apostacy; and yet to the Unitarians they can make the same objection. Where has any christian church, for so many ages, held that Christ was not God? Against the Papist they will prove, that the Fathers did not hold the elements to be Christ's real body and blood, because they oft call them the images thereof; but let the Unitarians argue that Christ is not the supreme God, because the Scripture styles him the *image* of God, and therefore not the God whose image only he is; then the thing itself and its image must be the same

thing.* Against the Papist they can prove St Peter was inferior to the church, and the rest of the Apostles, (though not singly to each,) because he was *sent* up and down by them. This Baronius takes hold of, and tells them, by the same reason they must grant the Arians' argument to be good, viz. that the Father is greater than the Son, because the Son is *sent* by him. But let an Unitarian argue thus, and then, though the Father *sends*, and the Son be *sent* by him, yet they shall both be equal, and this shall make no difference.

Against the Papists they will boast, that they do not hoodwink the people in ignorance ; but bid them inquire and examine, and the more the better, while it is ground of suspicion, that the Papists cheat men, by their keeping them from the light ; but now having to do with the Unitarians, they tack about, and bid beware of reading and disputing ; they are for an implicit faith, without examining into deep mysteries ; they bid us believe, not pry into them ; though we only desire to examine whether the Scriptures do reveal any such mysteries at all ; the rest we will believe, if we could see that, and desire no other liberty in interpreting Scripture, than they take so justly in interpreting Christ's words, " This is my body." Upon Protestant principles the Unitarians think they can stand their ground, and defend themselves in these

* Euseb. cont. Marcel. p. 26.

matters, as easily as the Protestant can against the Papists.

As to primitive antiquity, so many inquirers, both among the Romish and Reformed writers, have given their impartial testimony, that it runs for *Arius's doctrine*; and have made such poor apologies for those Fathers, as though they knew not, or were not careful of their fundamental articles of faith, till they came to be banded about in general Councils, that I think it not needful to say more here. Only one thing I would suggest; that allowing the primitive writers to speak in different places with great, at least seeming discord, which any ingenuous man must grant, sometimes plainly declaring Jesus Christ inferior to, and the servant of the Father, before his incarnation; at other times giving him high titles, as of one equal with God; yet it is far more reasonable to suppose the higher expressions should be expounded according to the other, than the contrary; because in discoursing of, and pleading for a beloved admired object, as the Lord Jesus deserves to be, it is very easy and natural to run out into strains of eloquence, and lofty flights of praise, which must be interpreted not with strict rigour, but with great abatements, as is to be observed in some of their high encomiums on the venerable mystery of the eucharist, as though with the Papists they took the elements for Christ's real Body, which yet they evidently did deny. But on the contrary, no

men are wont ever to speak diminutively on such occasions; they could not have a thought to lessen their master's glory; and therefore if they ever represent him as not the supreme God, nor equal to him, we have all reason to think, they then spake the words of truth and soberness, and what the exact matter required.

For my own part, as I write this under the serious impressions of those great relations in which the blessed Jesus stands to me, whom I credit as my great teacher; whom I desire to admire and love as my gracious endeared benefactor, beyond father and mother, or friends; whom I reverence as my Lord and ruler, and solemnly expect as my final glorious judge, who is to come in his own, and in his Father's glory; and in the mean time deal with God through him, as my only Mediator and Intercessor; so I earnestly profess, that it is not without grievous and bitter resentments, that I should be employed in writing things, which by so many well meaning Christians will be misinterpreted, to be derogatory to the honour of this great Redeemer. But I know he loves nothing but truth in his cause, and will never be offended, I hope, with any who stand by his own words, viz. "The Father is greater than I." John xiv. 28. I think it a dangerous thing to say, God is not greater than he, or is not the head of Christ; for, "whom will ye equal to me, saith the Holy One?" Isa. xl. 25. I am persuaded it is truth I plead for, and that supports me.

SECTION IV.

The Conclusion, exhorting Christians to Moderation and Temper in their Management of this Controversy.

However, I wish they who are adversaries to my persuasion, would learn at least the modesty of one of the earliest writers for Christianity since the Apostles, that we have, I mean Justin Martyr, disputing with a Jew, and pleading for the honour of Jesus Christ, whom he calls "God by the will of the Father," and one who "ministered to his will," before his incarnation. This person attempts to shew, that Jesus Christ did preexist of old, as a God, (in *his* sense,) and was born afterwards of a virgin; but because, as he says, there were some who confessed him to be Christ, and yet denied those points of his preexistence and his miraculous birth of a virgin, that Father calmly says to his adversary, "If I shall not demonstrate these things, that he did preexist, and was born of a virgin; yet still the cause is not lost, as to his being the Christ of God; if I do not prove that he did preexist, &c. it is just to say that I am mistaken in this thing only, and not to deny that he is the Christ; for whosoever he be, that is every way demonstrated, that he is the Christ." And as for those Christians, who denied the above said things, and held him to be only a man, born in the ordinary way, he only says of them, *to whom I accord not.*

He does not damn them, who differed from him, nor will say the Christian religion is subverted, and Christ but an impostor, and a broken reed to trust on, if he be not the very supreme God, (the ranting dialect of some in our age;) no, but still he was sure he is the true Christ, whatever else he might be mistaken in. It is desperate wickedness in men to hazard the reputation of the truth and holiness of the blessed Jesus upon a difficult and disputable opinion; to dare to say, that if they are mistaken in their opinion, which I verily believe they are, then Jesus Christ is a *liar* and a *deceiver*, a *mock Saviour*, and the like. What is this but to expose him to the scorn of infidels?

So that I see with sorrow, that to this very day, even among professed Christians themselves, Christ crucified is to some a stumblingblock, and to others foolishness. If he be not as good and great as the God who appointed him for a Saviour, though he be allowed to be a *man approved of God*, by signs and mighty wonders, which God did by him, and by whom God made the worlds, as the instrument; though he be granted to be one in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead, so as it never dwelt before in prophets or any other; though he be one with the Father, by *unity of consent and will*, as Calvin interprets John x. 30, one in *testimony* with the Father and Spirit, as Beza and many others understand that in 1 John v. 7; though he be the most lively visible *image* of God that the world ever saw, so that he who sees him does, *in great measure, see the Father*, as in a bright mir-

John xiv. 10; though he be owned and served, as *far above* angels and archangels, and *over all* powers in heaven and earth, a God or Ruler, the great administrator of God's kingdom, both on earth and in invisible *hades*, as *having the keys*, or ministerial power of *death and hell*, Rev. i. 18; yet, after all, if he be not the very supreme God himself; nay, to complete the absurdity, if he be not the very *same* God, whose Son and Image he is, he shall be no more for them. They do, *ex hypothesi*, or on this position, openly disown him for their Saviour and confidence; they are ashamed to trust in him, and are rather to deride and reproach him, as insufficient

contemptible, than to believe on him.* These things are to me a very grievous offence, who think it a great pity that so excellent a constitution as the Gospel is, so amiable to contemplate, so proper to enter into our thankful admiration for the grace and wisdom it contains, should either be lost in the clouds of an untraced obscurity, or exposed to the derision of ungodly scoffers.

It is yet a farther grief to think, what a fatal stop is hereby put to the progress of the Gospel; whose rejection by Jews, Mahometans and Pagans, is undeniable, occasioned by the common doctrine of the incarnation of God. One may read in Le Comte's history of China, how the heathens derided the Christians' doctrine of a mortal God; and upon that account es-

* Dr Calamy's Sermons on the Trinity, p. 130, 340.

teemed christianity as fabulous as their own religion. And Doctor Casaubon, in his book of *Credulity and Incredulity*, says, he could prove by many instances out of history, that this "doctrine has kept more people from embracing the christian faith, than any other thing he knew of." Now though I grant, that if it be the certain truth of God, this must be no argument against receiving it; yet surely it should make men very cautious and impartial in their inquiry about it, lest they bring on themselves the woe denounced against them by whom offences, that is, stumbling blocks in the way of the Gospel, do come.

In the mean time, in the midst of these troubles, it is a great and sweet refreshment to wait and hope for a remove to the *mount Moriah*, the land of vision above, where all these shades of melancholy night shall vanish away, and an eternal day of clear light and peace shall shine on them, "who love our Lord Jesus in sincerity;" in whose glorious dignity I rejoice; nay, I desire to boast and glory in this exalted, enthroned Redeemer; for "worthy is the Lamb to receive glory," and honour, and blessing, and power. Amen. So be it! Now to him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests to God, even the Father, to him be glory and dominion forever. "But this I confess unto thee, that after the way, which they call Heresy, so worship I the God of my Fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets." Acts xxiv. 14.

DANGER OF RASHNESS

IN

CENSURING OTHERS AS HERETICS.

FROM THE APPENDIX TO EMLYN'S NARRATIVE.

THE plain truth is, if Christians would believe with a holy religious faith, and be content with a religious, rather than a philosophical creed, Christianity would better be preserved; for what is it but a scholastic philosophical faith, that runs upon metaphysical notions of *essence*, and *persons*, and *emanations*, and *consubstantiality*, and the *methods of divine decrees*, and *God's physical operation and concourse*? The holy Christian faith regards God in a religious sense, not so much in his infinity, immensity, spirituality, and other natural and absolute excellencies, as in his relative excellencies and moral perfections, viz. as our maker, our owner, our ruler, disposer, judge, benefactor, and chief good; and it regards Jesus Christ as our sufficient Mediator, by whose intervention we are brought into God's favour, and are taught his will.

And as he is a good believer in God, who reveres his majesty, is moulded into his will, loves and trusts in him, and makes him the centre of his delightful rest, and satisfying joy; so is he a good believer in Jesus Christ, who owns him as his Lord; who receives and obeys his laws, credits his threats and promises, and confides in his mediation and intercession; without subtle philosophising upon his nature and generation, or without forensic political disquisitions, and logical quibbles about *justification*.

What if all Christians have not the same abstracted speculations of God and Christ, (for all have not the same knowledge,) is it therefore not the same God, and the same Lord? Yes, doubtless; if the Jews believed in Jesus Christ when on earth, though they believed not his miraculous conception, would any say it was not the same Christ that other disciples believed in? Surely it was enough, that Jesus was *he*, John viii. 24. whatever different notions they had about his origin. And it is the same if an honest Christian believes him sufficient to bring him to salvation, without being able to give a philosophical or critical account how he has this sufficiency; so that here will still be *one God*, and *one Lord*, both *theirs and ours*, by which Christians may unite and agree in the doctrine which is *according to godliness*. And so Constantine the emperor seems to have meant, when he advised Alexander and Arius *not to break communion* for such things, comparatively small, since

consistent with the principal design of religion, if not too nicely debated and imposed.*

And thus it is in other points relating to Almighty God. The holy Scriptures require no accurate philosophical notions of God's eternity, omnipresence, immensity, &c; they are content to give us only popular easy accounts of these matters, viz. that God *was before the earth was formed*; and that *he fills heaven and earth with his presence*, that he sees all things, and can exert his power everywhere; which are far from being *accurate notions* of eternity and immensity. They trouble not men with the niceties of *eternal successions*, or an eternal *τὸ πᾶν* without succession, or with *infinite spaces*, or of God's being present in *part*, or in *whole*, and the like metaphysical difficulties. No, if these things offer themselves to natural light in men of capacity and fine speculation, and they can fancy they have accurate notions about them, it is well and good; let them enjoy their own acquisitions; but this is not owing to Christianity, but philosophy; and so is not incumbent on every good Christian, nor required as matter of a virtuous religious belief; our religion imposes no such difficulties on us of believing with the understanding, what we cannot so much as perceive by it; it only requires us to believe what it reveals to us, that is, to our understanding and apprehension. Let the *wise men*, let the *Scribes*, let the *disputers of this world*,

* Euseb. Life of Constant. l. 2. c. 71.

busy and tire themselves as much as they please in such disquisitions; the Christian is happy enough in the easy popular notions of such divine perfections, when so powerfully received, as to form his mind into a holy admiration, reverence, and love of God; and his life to a serious obedient conformity to his will and laws. Let who will damn or reject him for not *understanding* their long critical philosophical creeds, their *modes* and *subsistencies*, or *personalities*; or for not professing them without understanding; the christian religion threatens him with no harm from God himself.

And men must not think, that like other arbitrary societies, they may appoint what terms of union and communion they please in the churches; and then cry, They who like them not, may go elsewhere; and that their ministers, when they no longer fancy them, shall be cast off at will and humour, for different sentiments about unscriptural words or notions; for a christian church has its terms and laws settled by Christ; it is his church, and the table is the Lord's table, and the ministers are Christ's ministers; and it is the highest usurpation in us to make inclosures, when he has left it open; and to turn out members, or pastors from their office, if they walk and act according to the design of their christian station. And men had need be sure, that the denying their unscriptural tests and shibboleths is such a crime as will justify these proceedings; otherwise, though it may signify little what

has been done to me, the unworthiest of many ; yet, in general, he whose *name was in the book of life*, Phil. iv. 3. has told us, *οὐ μικρὰ ἁμαρτία, &c.* *It is no small sin, to turn out from their office those, who have unblamably attended their ministry.**

I know very well, that men of an uncharitable complexion think they may justify their severity and bitter zeal, from the Apostle's counsel, to *reject and avoid heretics* ; but they would do well to consider seriously these few things, lest they abuse and pervert this counsel.

1. Whether all such *heresies* were not attended with immoral doctrines or practices, in a plain and uncontested opposition to the Apostle's doctrine ? And therefore those heresies are "works of the flesh ;" vicious, and immoral, and wilful acts, as *drunkenness, adultery, &c.* And the heretics were *selfcondemned*, without the decision of a synod ; accordingly one may see their foul characters, in 2 Pet. ii. and St Jude's Epistle. This made Augustine say, *Hæreticus esse nolo* ; because he could answer for his will† ; but when serious convictions and real strugglings of conscience force a man to own doctrines, which he takes to be the truths of Christ, against all the interests of the flesh and his worldly comfort, which he had rather lose than offend God ; how is it possible, if this man

* Clem. Ep. c. 44.

† See Hales of Eaton in his Tract of Schism ; "Heresy," says he, "is an act of the will, not of reason ; and is indeed a lie, not a mistake."

should be mistaken, that yet he should be such a heretic? *Nunquam errari tutius existimo, quam cum in nimio amore veritatis erratur.** It is his great love of truth that makes him err, and such error cannot be dangerous. "And certain it is, that he who after a pious attentive consideration falls into error, is more worthy, if not of praise, yet of pardon, than he that blindly assents to truth itself;" says Bishop Rust.

2. Whether in the ecclesiastical sense of the word *Heresy*, (as noting a *fundamental error* about the christian faith,) any, in the truly primitive church, were accounted *Heretics*, who received the primitive ancient creed, before any council presumed to frame new ones? This was wont to be the sufficient test of christianity and church communion, which I willingly assent to in its plain and fair sense. No subtle intricate interpretations were then obtruded as necessarily to be received; and indeed all sides tell us, when they please, that the fundamentals of christianity are *plain and easy* to be seen; and make this the great commendation of our religion. But where should they be plain, if not in the Creed? The express words of Bishop Davenant, so venerable and judicious in the sense of all parties, cited by Mr Howe in his Sermon of *Union among Protestants*, are thus; "He that believes the things contained in the Apostles' Creed, and endeavours to live a life agreeable to the precepts of Christ, ought not to be expunged from

* Aug. de Mendacio.

the roll of Christians, nor be driven from communion with the members of any church whatever."

3. Whether, at least, it be not extremely difficult for any to know, (if bare speculative error must be *heresy*,) what is *heresy*, and who are *heretics* now in these distant distracted ages, when Christians are so perplexed and divided in their interpretations and explications of many articles? In the Apostles' times, it was easy to know certainly who were in the wrong, by their open opposition to them, whom all the churches allowed to be right, and to be the infallible directors of their faith, and who contradicted such errors; but now each party appeals to *their* writings, and think they embrace their true meaning. But bishops and councils are not Christ and his Apostles. Here let me use the late Dr Sherlock's words against the Papists, for in controversy with them one may hear what they will not tell us in disputing against others. "While nothing," says he, "was heresy, but the denial of a plain acknowledged article of the christian faith, and there was no dispute, who were heretics, the power of deposing heretics was sacred and venerable, and had its just authority and effects; but since the controversy is what is heresy, and the world is divided about it, (what if he had said so of schism too?) though the power remains, yet the exercise of it becomes contemptible, when a church first coins new articles of faith, and then censures and deposes

them for heretics who do not believe them.”* It is not the same thing to reject the sacred text, and to mistake its sense. St Augustine says something to the same purpose; that “*it could hardly, if at all, be determined what made one a heretic.*”† And surely it can as little be determined now, by a wise man, though fools are hasty. And therefore what he said elsewhere is very rational, and worth considering by those who are fierce and rash in their charge of heresy, *Sæviant illi, &c.* “Let them be fierce and cruel, who know not how easy it is to err.”

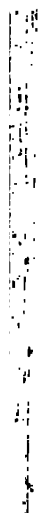
If such things were duly considered by hasty zealots, they would not be so prodigal of their anathemas; but would find the matter of *heresy* among conscientious Christians so very hard, and the precepts of love, peace, meekness and forbearance towards them who differ, so very easy, and plain to be discerned, that if an ill temper did not bias them more to what is cruel, and unkind, one would think none could be so bad a casuist, as not to determine on the plainest and most pleasant side of the question; and so “let brotherly love still continue.” At least it would make any good natured man speak with Salvian, *Errant, sed bono animo errant; apud nos hæretici sunt, apud se*

* Sherlock's Vindication of Protestant Principles about Church Government, p. 31.

† Quid vero faciat Hæreticum, regulari quadam definitione comprehendendi aut omnino non potest, aut difficulter potest. *Præfat. de Hærenibus.*

non sunt, &c. “ They do not think themselves heretics, though we do ; they err, but it is with an honest mind ; and how it will go with them at the great day, none but the Judge himself can tell.”* This is more Christian, and becoming a modest sense of our darkness and difficulties, than to pronounce honest minded men odious to God, and to render them odious to ignorant men, by charging them with, and anathematizing them for *damnable* heresies ; and that usually by rote as we have been taught, without knowing what, or how to answer, what they have to say for themselves, and which perhaps we are afraid should be known to others.

* De Guber. l. v.



ESSAYS

Anna Laetitia
BY MRS BARBAULD.

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THOUGHTS

ON

PUBLIC WORSHIP.

[THIS essay, as remarkable for the strength and beauty of its composition, as for its elevated and rational tone of piety, was written in reply to Mr Wakefield's treatise, in which this very learned and ingenious author attempted to show from the Scriptures, that there are no good grounds for the present custom of social, or public worship among Christians. He builds his argument on the practice of the Saviour, his precepts, and the example of the Apostles. He quotes many passages to illustrate each of these, and concludes from the whole, that no proofs can be found in the sacred writings of its having been designed by the founder of our religion, that certain days and seasons should be set apart for ceremonial or formal worship in a public manner. He thinks, also, that if such an institution as the sabbath had been intended to be perpetual in the christian church, it would have been enjoined by a direct, positive precept, or at least indicated by some explicit declaration on the part of the Saviour or his Apostles; whereas, nothing is said expressly on the subject, as implying a command, or rule, or recommendation, in any part of the Scriptures. Mr Wakefield considers secret

devotion as most conformable to the practice and precepts of Christ, and as most acceptable to God.

"The witness of our prayers," says he, "according to the command of our great Instructor, is not to be the congregation of Christians, but the invisible Father of mankind. The theatre of our devotions must not be the Chapel, the Church, or the Cathedral, tumultuous with the busy hum of men, but the secresy and silence of the closet. It is not, Jesus tells us, the duty of an humble Christian, by ringing his bell or blowing his horn, to invite multitudes of spectators to stimulate the fervour and to testify the patience of his devotions. He is not expected to show his homage to the Ruler of the universe, as we pay our respects to earthly potentates, in crowds, and pomp, and tumult; we must shut the door even of our closet, that no eye, so much as of our own household, may obtrude upon the tranquillity of our meditations, and no vanity be gratified by the curious observance of an admiring brother. Our concern is with God only. Let his inspection be our applause; and our recompense, his approbation. The features of resignation, unseen by man, will be faithfully marked by his eye; the secret whisper, the retired sigh, unheard in the congregation, will vibrate on his ear, and be registered in the volume of his remembrance, to testify in our favour before men and angels, when the formalities and sopperies of ceremonial worship are swept into oblivion."

Mr Wakefield's only argument against the use of public worship, which has much weight, is that drawn from the fact of the sabbath not being a *positive institution* under the christian scheme. But even taking this for granted, it does not follow, that the observance of a stated day of public worship is not of great im-

portance, in fixing the principles and securing the influence of the christian religion in the minds of men, and therefore wisely perpetuated. But Mrs Barbauld speaks so fully and eloquently on this point, as well as on others, that nothing needs be said to anticipate her argument. Her essay, as originally published, is entitled *Remarks on Mr Gilbert Wakefield's Enquiry into the Expediency and Propriety of Public or Social Worship*. It was written more than thirty years ago. A second edition was published in 1792.]

SECTION 1.

The Nature of Social or Public Worship, and its Accordance with the best Principles and Feelings of Man.

THERE are some practices, which have not been defended because they have never been attacked. Of this number is *Public or Social Worship*. It has been recommended, urged, enforced, but never vindicated. Through worldliness, skepticism, indolence, dissatisfaction with the manner of conducting it, it has been often neglected; but it is a new thing to hear it condemned. The pious and the good have lamented its insufficiency to the reformation of the world, but they were yet to learn that it was unfriendly to it. Satisfied with silent and solitary desertion, those who did not concur in the homage paid by their fellow-citizens were content to acquiesce in its propriety, and

had not hitherto assumed the dignity of a sect. A late pamphlet of Mr Wakefield's has therefore excited the attention of the public, partly, no doubt, from the known abilities of the author, but still more from the novelty and strangeness of the doctrine. If intended as an apology, no publication can be more seasonable, but if meant as an exhortation, or rather a dehortation, it is a labour which many will think, from the complexion of the times and the tendencies of increasing habits, might well have been spared. It is an awkward circumstance for the apostle of such a persuasion, that he will have many practical disciples whom he will hardly care to own ; and that if he succeeds in making proselytes, he must take them *from* the more sober and orderly part of the community ; and class them, as far as this circumstance affords a distinction, along with the uneducated, the profligate, and the unprincipled. The negative tenet he inculcates, does not mark his converts with sufficient precision ; their scrupulosity will be in danger of being confounded with the carelessness of their neighbours ; and it will be always necessary to ask, do you abstain because you are of this religion, or because you are of no religion at all ?

It would be unfair, however, to endeavour to render Mr Wakefield's opinions invidious ; they, as well as every other opinion, must be submitted to the test of argument ; and public worship, as well as every *other* practice, must stand on the basis of utility and

good sense, or it must not stand at all; and in the latter case, it is immaterial whether it is left to moulder like the neglected ruin, or battered down like the formidable tower.

It will stand upon this basis, if it can be shown to be agreeable to our nature, sanctioned by universal practice, countenanced by revealed religion, and that its tendencies are favourable to the morals and manners of mankind.

What is public worship? Kneeling down together while prayers are said of a certain length and construction, and hearing discourses made to a sentence of scripture called a text! Such might be the definition of an unenlightened person, but such would certainly not be Mr Wakefield's. The question ought to be agitated on much larger ground. If these practices are shown to be novel, it does not follow that public worship is so, in that extensive sense which includes all modes and varieties of expression. To establish its antiquity, we must therefore investigate its nature.

Public worship is the public expression of homage to the Sovereign of the universe. It is that tribute from men united in families, in towns, in communities, which individually men owe to their Maker. Every nation has, therefore, found some organ by which to express this homage, some language, rite, or symbol, by which to make known their religious feelings; but this organ has not always, nor chiefly been words.

The killing an animal, the throwing a few grains of incense into the fire, the eating bread and drinking wine, are all in themselves indifferent actions, and have apparently little connexion with devotion ; yet all of these have been used as worship, and are worship when used with that intention. The solemn sacrifices and anniversary festivals of the Jews, at which their capital and their temple were thronged with votaries from every distant part of the kingdom, were splendid expressions of their religious homage. Their worship, indeed, was interwoven with their whole civil constitution ; and so, though in a subordinate degree, was that of the Greeks and Romans, and most of the states of antiquity. There has never existed a nation, at all civilized, which has not had some appointed form of supplication, some stated mode of signifying the dependence we are under to the Supreme Being, and as a nation imploring his protection.

It is not pretended that these modes were all equally rational, equally edifying, equally proper for imitation, equally suitable for every state of society ; they have varied according as a nation was more or less advanced in refinement and decorum, more or less addicted to symbolical expression—to violent gesticulation—and more or less conversant with abstract ideas and metaphysical speculation. But whether the Deity is worshipped by strewing flowers and building tabernacles of verdure ; by dances round the altar and the shouts of a cheerful people ; by offering the first fruits of

harvest, and partaking in the social feast ; by tones of music, interpreted only by the heart ; or by verbal expressions of gratitude and adoration—whether the hallelujahs of assembled multitudes rise together in solemn chorus ; or whether they listen with composed and reverential attention to the voice of one man, appointed by them to be the organ of their feelings—whether a number of people meet together like the Quakers, and each in silence prefers his mental petition—wherever men together perform a stated act as an expression of homage to their Maker, there is the essence of public worship ; and public worship has therefore this mark of being agreeable to the nature of man, that it has been found agreeable to the sense of mankind in all ages and nations.

It is, indeed, difficult to imagine that beings, sensible of common wants and a common nature, should *not* join together in imploring common blessings ; that, prone as men are in every other circumstance to associate together, and communicate the electric fire of correspondent feelings, they should act with unsocial reserve only where those interests are concerned, which are confessedly the most important. Such is the temperament of man, that in every act and every event he anxiously looks around him to claim the gratulation or sympathy of his fellows. Religion, says Mr Wakefield, is a personal thing ; so is marriage, so is the birth of a child, so is the loss of a beloved relative, yet on all these occasions we are strongly impelled to public solemnity.

zation. We neither laugh alone, nor weep alone, why then should we pray alone? None of our feelings are of a more communicable nature than our religious ones. If devotion really exists in the heart of each individual, it is morally impossible it should exist there apart and single. So many separate tapers, burning so near each other, in the very nature of things must catch, and spread into one common flame.

The reciprocal advantages, which public and private worship possess over each other, are sufficiently obvious to make both desirable. While the former is more animated, the latter comes more intimately home to our own circumstances and feelings, and allows our devotion to be more particular and appropriated. To most of the objections made against the one, the other is equally liable. Superstition can drop her solitary beads, as well as vociferate the repetition of a public collect; if symptoms of weariness and inattention may be observed in our churches, we have only to look into the diaries of the most pious Christians, and we shall find still heavier complaints of the dulness and deadness of their spiritual frame; the thoughts may wander in the closet when the door is shut; folly and selfishness will send up improper petitions from the cell as well as from the congregation; nay, public worship has this great advantage, that it teaches those to pray, who, not being accustomed to think, cannot of themselves pray with judgment. To all, it teaches that we are not to pray for exclusive advan-

tages, but to consider ourselves as members of a community. Our inmost wishes learn restraint while our petitions are thus directed, and our desires by degrees conform themselves to that spirit of moderation and justice, without which we cannot join in the comprehensive prayer, that must include the joint supplications of a numerous assembly.

Public worship has this further advantage over private, that it is better secured against languor on one side, and enthusiasm on the other. If the devotional sentiment has not taken deep root in his mind, a man will scarcely keep up, in silence and in solitude, an intercourse to which he is prompted by no external appearance, and of which he is reminded by no circumstance of time or place. And if his sense of invisible things is strong enough to engage his mind in spite of these disadvantages, there is room to fear, lest, by brooding in silence over objects of such indistinct vastness, his bewildered ideas and exalted imagination should lead him to the reveries of mysticism; an extreme no less to be dreaded than that of indifference. When Mr Wakefield, to strengthen his argument for seclusion in our religious exercises, directs our attention to the mount of Olives and the garden of Gethsemane, he should recollect that our Saviour sustained a character to which we cannot presume to aspire; and that, however favourable the desert and the wilderness have been to prophets visited by extraordinary illuminations, they cannot be equally suitable to the *regular devotion* of ordinary Christians.

From the gloom of the cloister and the loneliness of the cell, have proceeded the most extravagant deviations from nature and from reason. Enthusiasm is indeed most dangerous in a crowd, but it seldom originates there. The mind, heated with intense thinking, adopts illusions to which it is not exposed when its devotion is guided and bounded by addresses, which are intended to meet the common sentiments of a numerous assembly. Religion then appears with the most benignant aspect, is then least likely to be mistaken, when the presence of our fellow creatures points out our connexion with the businesses of life and the duties of society. Solitary devotion, for worldly minds, is insufficient, for weak minds it is not profitable, for ardent minds it is not safe.

We must, however, do that justice to the author of the Enquiry, as to confess that he betrays no disposition to carry these exercises to any extreme. On the contrary, some of his expressions seem to strike at the root of all *prayer*, properly so called, as being the weak effort of an infirm and unphilosophical mind to alter the order of nature and the decrees of Providence, in which it rather becomes the wise man to acquiesce with a manly resignation. Without entering into a discussion, in which, perhaps, we might misrepresent his sentiments; as, in the greater part of his pamphlet, he has taken the ground of Scripture, which undoubtedly countenances the earnestness, and almost the importunity of petition; it may be sufficient

for the present purpose to observe, that if there exists a man who, believing himself to be in the continual presence of infinite power, directed by infinite love and tender compassion to all his creatures—thinking often of this Being, and habitually referring every disposition of events to his providence—feeling himself more constantly and intimately connected with him, than with all creation besides—can in every vicissitude of his life, in sickness and in sorrow, in imminent danger, anxious uncertainty, desertion or loss of friends, and all the trying circumstances of humanity that flesh is heir to; forbear, for himself or for those dearer to him than himself, to put up one petition to the throne of God—such a one may be allowed to strike out every petition in the Lord's Prayer but that comprehensive one, *thy will be done*. If his faith be equally lively, his devotional feelings equally fervent, his sense of dependence upon God equally felt in his inmost soul, we dare not presume to censure the temperance of his religious addresses. We respect the subdued sobriety of his wishes, and we do not, we cannot suppose him deserted by the supreme Being for that modest forbearance, which proceeds from a resignation so absolute and complete.

Others, however, whose philosophy is not of so firm a texture, may plead the example of him who prayed, though with meek submission, that the cup of bitterness might pass from him; and who, as the

moment of separation approached, interceded for his friends and followers with all the anxiety of affectionate tenderness. But we will venture to say that practically there is no such philosopher. If prayer were not enjoined for the perfection, it would be permitted to the weakness of our nature. We should be betrayed into it, if we thought it sin, and pious ejaculations would escape our lips, though we were obliged to preface them with, God forgive me for praying!

To those who press the objection, that we cannot see in what manner our prayers can be answered, consistently with the government of the world according to those general laws by which we find, in fact, that it is governed; it may be sufficient to say, that prayer being made almost an instinct of our nature, it cannot be supposed but that, like all other instincts, it has its use; that no idea can be *less* philosophical than one which implies, that the existence of a God who governs the world, should make no difference in our conduct; and few things less probable than that the childlike submission which bows to the will of a father, should be exactly similar in feature to the stubborn patience, which bends under the yoke of necessity.

It may be further observed, that petitions for temporal advantages, such, I mean, as a spirit of moderation will allow us to *wish* with sufficient ardour to make them the subject of our prayers, are

not liable to more objections than petitions for spiritual blessings. In either case the weak man does, and the wise man does not expect a miracle. That the arrogant, the worldly, and the licentious, should on a sudden, and without their own strenuous endeavours, be rendered humble, simpleminded, and pure of heart, would be as great a violation of the order of nature in the moral world, as it would be in the natural world that the harvest should ripen without the cooperation of the husbandman, and the slow influence of the seasons. Indeed, as temporal blessings are less in our power than dispositions, and are sometimes entirely out of it, it seems more reasonable of the two to pray for the former than for the latter; and it is remarkable that, in the model given us in the Lord's Prayer, there is not a single petition for any virtue or good disposition, but there is one for daily bread. Good dispositions, particularly a spirit of resignation, are declared and implied in the petitions, but they are not prayed for; events are prayed for, and circumstances out of our own power, relative to our spiritual concerns, are prayed for, as, the not being led into temptation; but there is no prayer that we may be *made* holy, meek, or merciful. Nor is it an objection to praying for health, that sickness may possibly turn out a blessing, since it is no objection to the using all the means in our power to get rid of sickness, which we do as eagerly and as unreservedly, as if we had not the least idea that it ever

could be salutary. And we do right; for the advantages of sickness are casual and adventitious; but health is in itself, and in its natural tendencies, a blessing, *devoutly to be wished for*. That no advantage of this nature ought to be prayed or wished for, unqualified with the deepest submission to the will of God, is an undoubted truth; and it is a truth likewise universally acknowledged by all rational Christians.

It cannot be denied, however, that great reserve is necessary in putting up specific petitions, especially of a public nature; but generally the fault lies in our engaging in wrong pursuits, rather than in imploring upon our pursuits the favour of heaven. Humanity is shocked to hear prayers for the success of an unjust war; but humanity and heaven were *then* offended when the war was engaged in; for war is of a nature sufficiently serious to warrant our prayers to be preserved from the calamities of it, if we have not voluntarily exposed ourselves to them. The frivolous nature of most national contests appears strongly in this very circumstance, that petitions from either side have the air of a profanation; but if in some serious conjuncture our country was ready to be overwhelmed by an ambitious neighbour, as that of the Dutch was in the time of Louis the Fourteenth,—in such a season of calamity, the sternest philosopher would give way to the instinctive dictates of nature, and implore the help which cometh from on high. The reason *why both* sides cannot pray with propriety, is because *both sides* cannot act with justice.

But supposing we were to discard all petition, as the weak effort of infirm minds to alter the unbroken chain of events ; as the impatient breathings of craving and restless spirits, not broken into patient acquiescence with the eternal order of Providence—the noblest office of worship still remains.

*Praise is devotion fit for mighty minds,
The jarring world's agreeing sacrifice.*

And this is surely of a social nature. One class of religious duties separately considered, tends to depress the mind, filling it with ingenuous shame and wholesome sorrow ; and to these humiliating feelings solitude might perhaps be found congenial ; but the sentiments of admiration, love, and joy, swell the bosom with emotions, which seek for fellowship and communication. The flame indeed may be kindled by silent musing ; but when kindled it must infallibly spread. The devout heart, penetrated with large and affecting views of the immensity of the works of God, the harmony of his laws, and the extent of his beneficence, bursts into loud and vocal expressions of praise and adoration ; and, from a full and overflowing sensibility, seeks to expand itself to the utmost limits of creation. The mind is forcibly carried out of itself, and, embracing the whole circle of animated existence, calls on all above, around, below, to help to bear the burden of its gratitude. Joy is too brilliant a thing to be confined within our own bosoms ; it burnishes all nature, and with its vivid

colouring gives a kind of factitious life to objects without sense or motion.

There cannot be a more striking proof of the social tendency of these feelings, than the strong propensity we have to *suppose* auditors where there are none. When men are wanting, we address the animal creation ; and, rather than have none to partake our sentiments, we find sentiment in the music of the birds, the hum of insects, and the low of kine ; nay, we call on rocks and streams and forests to witness and share our emotions. . Hence the royal shepherd, sojourning in caves and solitary wastes, calls on the hills to rejoice and the floods to clap their hands ; and the lonely poet, wandering in the deep recesses of uncultivated nature, finds a temple in every solemn grove, and swells his chorus of praise with the winds that bow the lofty cedars. And can he who, not satisfied with the wide range of existence, calls for the sympathy of the inanimate creation, refuse to worship with his fellow men ? Can he, who bids " Nature attend," forget to " join every *living* soul " in the universal hymn ? Shall we *suppose* companions in the stillness of deserts, and shall we overlook them among friends and townsmen ? It cannot be ! Social worship, for the devout heart, is not more a duty than it is a real want.

SECTION II.

Public Worship countenanced by Revealed Religion.

If Public Worship is thus found to be agreeable to the best impulses of our nature, the pious mind will rejoice to find it, at least, not discountenanced by revealed religion. But its friends, in endeavouring to prove this, must carry on the argument under some disadvantage, as Mr Wakefield, though he lays great stress on the presumptive arguments, which seem to favour the negative side of the question, will not allow the same force to those which may be urged on the other side. *The practice of Christ*, he tells us, *is an authority to which all believers will bow the knee, a tribunal by which all our controversies must be awarded*; yet he gives us notice at the same time, that to this authority, if brought against him, he will not bow the knee; and from this tribunal, if unfriendly to his cause, he will appeal; for that prayers and all external observances *are beggarly elements*, to be laid aside in the present maturity of the christian church; and that, *even if social worship were an original appendage of the Gospel*, the idea of a *progressive Christianity* would justify us in rejecting it. With this inequality of conditions, which it is sufficient just to notice, let us consider the array of texts which are drawn up against the practice in question; and particularly those precepts which, Mr Wakefield says, are evidences that *directly and literally prove public*

worship to be *unauthorized by christianity, and inconsistent with it*, and which he distinguishes from those which condemn it merely by inference.

The first of these direct evidences is the injunction, not to worship as the hypocrites, who are fond of exhibiting in the most public places. "And when thou prayest, be not as the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men; verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret." But is it not evident, that the force of this precept is not aimed against public prayer, but against private prayer performed in public; against the ostentatious display which seeks to distinguish us from others, not the genuine sympathy which makes us desirous of blending our feelings with theirs? It was devotion obtruding itself in the face of business, amidst the show and bustle of the world. It did not seek for fellowship, but observation. It did not want the concurrence of men, but to be seen by them. Even in the synagogue it was silent, solitary, unsocial, and with sullen reserve and cold disdain kept itself aloof from communion, and invited only applause. The Pharisee and the Publican both went up to the temple to worship, but they worshipped not together. Certainly the delicate and modest nature of sincere piety must shrink from an exhibition like

this ; and would not wish to have its feelings noticed, but where at the same time they may be shared. This text therefore seems to be only a caution respecting the proper performance of our *closet* duties.

“Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit.” True it is, the hour is come in which it is allowed by all rational believers, that the acceptableness of prayer does not depend on the sacredness of any particular place. The Jews wanted to be informed of this. They, naturally enough, were apt to consider their temple as the habitation of the divine Being, in the same manner as a palace is the habitation of an earthly sovereign, a place where men may come to make their court, and bring presents, and ask favours in return. These ideas have been done away by those more honourable notions of the divine Being, which our Saviour and good men after him have laboured to inculcate. We conceive of a church as of a building, not for God to reside, but for men to assemble in ; for, though God is a spirit, men have bodies, and they cannot meet to do any thing without having some place to do it in. Neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, means therefore exclusively, with an idea of any peculiar sacredness, or superstitious pre-

ference to any other structure, which might be equally commodious.

With regard to the character of our Saviour himself, it is certain he did not always call upon his disciples to share that more intimate, and, if I may say so, confidential, intercourse with his heavenly Father, which he may be supposed to have been favoured with ; and it must be confessed, there is no formal mention made of any exercises of this kind either with them, or with the people at large. But his whole life was a prayer. He, who in his most familiar and convivial moments, was raising the thoughts of his hearers to God, and nourishing their piety by occasional instruction, could not be supposed to leave them disinclined to the intercourses of social piety. The beautiful commendatory prayer, which he offered up when about to leave the world, though it was not entirely of the nature of social prayer, as his disciples did not join in it, yet, its being uttered in their presence, and their being the object of it, seems to place it nearly on the same ground. In the very miracle of the loaves, which Mr Wakefield has produced as an instance of an incident which might have given rise to public prayer, and which was suffered to pass without it ; in the account of this very miracle there is a direct precedent for the practice in question ; for, looking up to heaven, he *blessed* before he brake the bread. This, indeed, appears to have been his constant practice. It certainly does not belong to private

devotion, and is a species of prayer more apt, perhaps, than any other, to degenerate into a mere form.

But if we do not find public worship, properly so called, in the life of our Saviour, it is because we look for it in the wrong place. It is not to be sought for in his instructions, either to the multitude at large, or to his disciples in their more private conversations. This public worship was paid where the rest of the Jews paid theirs, in the temple. He came up, with the concourse of assembled multitudes, to the appointed religious festivals; he eat the passover, and associated with his fellowcitizens, even in those rites and that form of worship, which he knew was so soon to be abolished.

Our Lord seems indeed to have been an early and regular frequenter of whatever public worship the Jews had among them. What this was, besides their sacrifices and ceremonial observances, Mr Wakefield is infinitely better able than the author of these remarks, to collect from the volumes of Rabbinical learning; but, without going deeper into their antiquities, than what may be gathered from those records of their history, which are in the hands of every one, it may be seen that verbal addresses to the divine being often accompanied the public expressions of their thanksgiving. In their earliest times we have the song of Moses, in the burden of which the whole people, led by Miriam, joined in chorus. In a more polished age, the fine prayer of Solomon at the dedica-

tion of the temple, a composition which has never been excelled, comes yet nearer to our ideas of an address to the divine being; and the whole people bore a part in the worship by the response, "for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever."

A still more regular service is recorded by Nehemiah, when the people, after their return from the captivity, entered into that solemn renewal of their law described with so much affecting solemnity. *They stood and confessed their sins, then they read the law,* after which the Levites called upon them *to stand up and bless the Lord their God*; they stood up accordingly, and joined in what I suppose the author of the Enquiry would call a pretty long prayer. And when *Ezra blessed the Lord*, the people answered, *Amen, Amen*. All this is sufficiently similar not only to the spirit, but to the very routine of our present modes of worship. If it be said, that these instances all arose from peculiar and striking occasions, it may be answered, that it is not likely any other would be recorded; and that the regularity and grace with which they seem to have been performed, indicate a people not unaccustomed to such exercises. Indeed the Psalms of David afford every variety which any of our prayers do; confession, ascription, thanksgiving, &c. These, it should seem, were many of them set to music, and sung with proper responses; for even in the temple, the chief business of which was not prayer but sacrifice, the Levites and other singers,

at the time of the morning and evening sacrifice, sung psalms of praise to God before the altar, and in the conclusion the priests blessed the people.* And it is not probable, that in a later period of their history, amidst the greater degree of refinement and cultivation, they should have contented themselves with mere ritual observances.

This at least is evident, if in the time of our Saviour they had no worship similar to ours, he could not mean by anything he said to hint a dislike of it ; and if they had, he must have sanctioned the practice by conforming to it. But indeed it is acknowledged by most, and Mr Wakefield seems to admit, that after their return from the Babylonish captivity, when their hearts were purified by adversity and more attached to their religion, they had regular and stated worship in their synagogues, consisting of forms of prayer, reading the Scriptures, and expounding. In the former, we are told, a minister, called from his office the *angel* or *messenger of the church*, officiated as the mouth of the congregation ; but for the latter part of the service it was usual to call upon any stranger to take his share, who appeared to be sufficiently qualified to read and expound the lessons of the day. And hence probably it was, that our Saviour did not *pray* in the synagogues, though he often taught there, and interpreted the Scriptures.† Of their forms of

* See Prideaux's Connection, Vol. ii. p. 528.

† Ibid. p. 538.

prayer eighteen are given, held to be of high antiquity and peculiar sacredness ; and these are in a strain not dissimilar to the Liturgies of more modern times. In short, if we trace the accounts given us both of the plan of the service, and of its presbyters, ministers, and deacons, it will be found, that the Christian church, in its corresponding officers, its collects, litanies, and expositions, is the legitimate daughter of the Jewish synagogue ; and we shall be led to admire the singular fate of a nation, decreed to be at once imitated and despised.

Thus much may be sufficient to say upon a subject which, after all, is purely a question of historical curiosity.

To return to the character of our Saviour. His great business in the world was instruction ; and this he dispensed, not in a systematic, but a popular manner ; nor yet in a vague and declamatory style, but in a pointed and appropriated one ; not where it would most shine, but where it was most wanted. He was the great reformer, the innovator of his day ; and the strain of his energetic eloquence was strongly pointed against abuses of all kinds, and precisely those points of duty were most insisted on which he found most neglected. Almost all his discourses are levelled against some prevailing vice of the times, some fashionable worldly maxim, some artful gloss of a well known precept, some evasion of an acknowledged duty. They were delivered as occasion

prompted, and therefore it was that they came so home to men's business and bosoms; for he might have delivered the most elaborate lectures on morality, and religion too, without offending the Scribes and Pharisees, if he had confined himself to system, and not attacked corruption. We shall therefore meet with continual disappointment if, in the few scattered discourses, most of them too conversations, which are preserved to us of our Saviour, we expect to find any thing like a regular code of laws, and still less a formulary of rules. He referred to known laws, and only endeavoured to restore the spirit of them, and to exalt the motive of obedience.

The great duty of honouring our parents had probably not found a place in his instructions, but to expose the *tradition* which had *made it of none effect*. It is therefore a very inconclusive argument against a practice, either that we are not expressly enjoined it in the Gospel, or that the abuses of it are strongly dwelt upon; and this may serve for a general answer to Mr Wakefield's objections built upon the animated denunciations against those who, for a pretence, make long prayers, and who cry, Lord, Lord,—against vain repetitions—upon the exhortations to worship in spirit and in truth—the declaration that the Sabbath is made for man, and not man for the Sabbath—with a thousand others in the same strain, with which the Gospel undoubtedly abounds. But is the utility of a practice destroyed by the abuse of it, or is it of none,

because it is not of the chief value? Are none of our duties subordinate, yet real? Or have they all the proud motto, *Aut Caesar aut nullus*?

As to the idea of a *progressive Christianity*, on which the author of the Enquiry lays so much stress, as no new revelation has been pretended subsequent to its original promulgation, it is difficult to conceive of any progress in it, distinct from the progress of reason and civilisation in the different countries where it may be received. Now I do not know what right we have to suppose that the Jews in the time of our Saviour, were so gross in their ideas as to require a mode of worship, which deserves to be stigmatised with the appellation of *beggarly elements* and the *twilight of superstition*. They were probably as different from their countrymen in the time of the Judges, as we are from our ancestors of the Saxon heptarchy. They had long had among them most of those causes, which tend to develop the mental powers. A system of laws and polity, writers of the most distinguished excellence, commercial and political intercourse with other nations; they had acute and subtle disputants, and an acquaintance with different sects of philosophy; and, under these circumstances, it is probable that most of those questions would be agitated which, at similar periods, have exercised and perplexed the human faculties. Be that as it may, Mr Wakefield, by considering public worship as a practice to be adapted to the *exigencies of the times*, evidently aban-

done the textual ground, in which narrow path he seemed hitherto to have trod with such scrupulous precaution, and places it on the broader footing of utility. The *utility* of this practice therefore comes next to be considered.

SECTION III.

Advantages derived from the Practice of Social or Public Worship.

It is an error, which is extremely incident to minds of a delicate and anxious sensibility, to suppose that practices do no good, which do not all the good that might be expected from them. Let those who, in a desponding mood, are apt to think thus of public worship, calculate, if they can, what would be the consequence if it were laid aside. Perhaps it is not easy to estimate how much of the manners as well as the morals, how much of the cultivation as well as the religion of a people are derived from this very source. If a legislator or philosopher were to undertake the civilisation of a horde of wild savages, scattered along the waste in the drear loneliness of individual existence, and averse to the faces of each other, if he had formed a plan to gather them together, and give them a principle of cohesion; he probably could not take a more effectual method than by persuading them to meet together in one place, &c.

regular and stated times, and there to join together in a common act, imposing from its solemnity and endearing from the social nature of its exercises.

If an adventurer were stranded on some foreign shore, and should find the inhabitants engaged in such an act, he might draw the conclusion, that the blessings of order, internal peace, mutual confidence, and a considerable degree of information, existed there, as surely as the philosopher drew a similar inference from the discovery of mathematical diagrams traced upon the sand. And thus, in fact, it was, that in the early beginnings of society, legislators called in the assistance of religious ideas, and with the charm and melody of solemn hymns, like those of Orpheus or of Linus, gathered round them the stupid, incurious barbarians, roused them to attention and softened into docility. Agreeably to this train of thinking, our great dramatic moralist places the influences of social worship upon a par with the sacred touches of sympathetic sorrow, and the exhilarating pleasures of the hospitable board, and makes it one of the features which distinguish the urbanity of polished life, from the rude and unfeeling ferocity which belongs to a clan of unprincipled banditti.

If ever you have looked on better days,
If ever been where bells have knolled to church,
If ever sate at any good man's feast,
If ever from your eyelids wiped a tear,
And known what 'tis to pity and be pitied ;
Let gentleness your strong enforcement be.

For, independent of the peculiar object of public religious assemblies, many collateral advantages are derived from them, which the liberal thinker will by no means despise. The recurrence of appointed days of rest and leisure, which, but for this purpose, would never have been appointed, divides the weary months of labour and servitude with a separating line of a brighter colour. The church is a centre of union for neighbours, friends, and townsmen; and it is a reasonable and a pleasing ground of preference in our attachments, that we have "walked to the house of God in company." Even the common greetings that pass between those who meet there, are hallowed by the occasion of the meeting, and the spirit of civic urbanity is mingled with a still sweeter infusion of christian courtesy. By the recurrence of this intercourse, feuds and animosities are composed, which interrupted the harmony of friends and acquaintance; and those who avoided to meet because they could not forgive, are led to forgive, being obliged to meet.

Its effect in humanising the lower orders of society, and fashioning their manners to the order and decorum of civil life, is apparent to every reflecting mind. The poor, who have not formed a habit of attending here, remain from week to week in their sordid cells, or issue thence to places of licentiousness more sordid; while those, who assemble with the other inhabitants of the place, are brought into the frequent view of their superiors; their persons are known, their ac-

pearance noted ; the inquiring eye of benevolence pursues them to their humble cottages, and they are not unfrequently led home from social worship to the social meal. If the rich and poor were but thus brought together regularly and universally, that single circumstance would be found sufficient to remove the squalidness of misery, and the bitterness of want ; and poverty would exist only as a sober shade in the picture of life, on which the benevolent eye might rest with a degree of complacency, when fatigued with the more gaudy colouring of luxury and show.

The good effect of public worship in this light is remarkably conspicuous in the Sunday schools. Many of the children, who attend, have probably not very clearly comprehended any religious system ; but the moving and acting under the public eye, together with a sense of duty and moral obligation, which, however obscure, always accompanies the exercises of religion, soon transforms them into a different kind of beings. They acquire a love of neatness and regularity ; a sense of propriety insinuates itself into their young minds, and produces, instead of the sullen and untamed licentiousness, which at once shuns and hates the restraints of better life, the modest deference and chastened demeanour of those who respect others because they respect themselves.

Public Worship conveys a great deal of instruction in an indirect manner. Even those didactic prayers which run out into the enumeration of the attributes

of the divine Being, and of the duties of a virtuous life, though, perhaps, not strictly proper as prayer, have their use in storing the minds of the generality with ideas on these important subjects ; and the beauty and sublimity of many of these compositions must operate powerfully in lifting the heart to God, and inspiring it with a love of virtue. Improper as public prayers may have sometimes been, private prayers are likely to be still more so. Whatever contempt Mr Wakefield may choose to throw on the official abilities of those who lead the service, it will not be denied that they are generally better informed than those who follow. Men to whom spiritual ideas are familiar from reading and study, do not sufficiently appreciate the advantage, which the illiterate enjoy by the fellowship and communication of superior minds, who are qualified to lead their ideas in the right track.

Public Worship is a means of invigorating faith. Though argument be one means of generating belief, and that on which all belief must ultimately rest, it is not the only means, nor, with many minds, the most efficacious. Practical faith is greatly assisted by joining in some act in which the presence and persuasion of others give a sort of reality to our perception of invisible things. The metaphysical reasoner, entangled in the nets of sophistry, may involve himself in the intricacies of contradictory syllogisms till reason grows giddy, and scarcely able to hold the balance ; but when he acts in presence of his fellow creatures,

his mind resumes its tone and vigour, and social devotion gives a colour and body to the deductions of his reason. Berkeley, probably, never doubted of the existence of the material world when he had quitted his closet. Some minds are not capable of that firmness of decision, which embraces truth upon a bare preponderancy of argument—some, through a timorous and melancholy spirit, remain always in a perplexed and doubting state, if they rest merely on the conclusions built upon their own investigation. But every act in consequence of our faith, strengthens faith. These, when they enter a place of worship, amidst all the animating accompaniments of social homage, are seized with a happy contagion; slow hesitating doubts vanish in a moment, and give way to sincere and cordial feeling. These are not proofs, it is true; but they are helps, adapted to our nature, necessary to the generality, expedient for all. As for the multitude, so unaccustomed are they to any process of abstruse reasoning, and so much do they require the assistance of some object within the grasp of their senses, that it is to be doubted whether they could be at all persuaded of the existence of a spiritual invisible power, if that existence was not statedly acknowledged by some act which should impress the reality of it upon their minds, by connecting it with places, persons, and times.

Let it be observed, in the next place, that Public Worship is a *civic* meeting. The temple is the only

~~place~~ place where human beings, of every rank, and sex, and age, meet together for one common purpose, and join together in one common act. Other meetings are either political, or formed for the purposes of splendor and amusement ; from both which, in this country, the bulk of inhabitants are of necessity excluded. This is the only place, to enter which nothing more is necessary than to be of the same species ;—the only place, where man meets man not only as an equal but a brother ; and where, by contemplating his duties, he may become sensible of his rights. So high and haughty is the spirit of aristocracy, and such the increasing pride of the privileged classes, that it is to be feared, if men did not attend at the same place here, it would hardly be believed they meant to go to the same place hereafter. It is of service to the cause of freedom therefore, no less than to that of virtue, that there is one place where the invidious distinctions of wealth and titles are not admitted ; where all are equal, not by making the low, proud, but by making the great, humble

How many a man exists, who possesses not the smallest property in this earth of which you call him lord ; who, from the narrowing spirit of property, is circumscribed and hemmed in by the possessions of his more opulent neighbours, till there is scarcely an unoccupied spot of verdure on which he can set his foot to admire the beauties of nature, or barren mountain on which he can draw the fresh air without

a trespass. The enjoyments of life are for others, the labours of it for him. He hears those of his class spoken of collectively, as of machines, which are to be kept in repair indeed, but of which the sole use is to raise the happiness of the higher orders. Where, but in the temples of religion, shall he learn that he is of the same species? He hears there, (and were it for the first time, it would be with infinite astonishment,) that all are considered as alike ignorant and to be instructed; all alike sinful and needing forgiveness; all alike bound by the same obligations, and animated by the same hopes.

In the intercourses of the world the poor man is seen, but not noticed; he may be in the presence of his superiors, but he cannot be in their company. In every other place it would be presumption in him to let his voice be heard along with theirs; here alone they are both raised together, and blended in the full chorus of praise. In every other place it would be an offence to be near them, without shewing in his attitudes and deportment the conscious marks of inferiority; here only he sees the prostrations of the rich as low as his, and hears them both addressed together in the majestic simplicity of a language that knows no adulation. Here the poor man learns that, in spite of the distinctions of rank, and the apparent inferiority of his condition, all the true goods of life, all that men dare petition for when in the presence of their Maker — a sound mind, a healthful body, and daily bread,

lie within the scope of his own hopes and endeavours; and that in the large inheritance to come, his expectations are no less ample than theirs. He rises from his knees, and feels himself a man. He learns philosophy without its pride, and a spirit of liberty without its turbulence. Every time Social Worship is celebrated, it includes a virtual declaration of the rights of man.

It may be further observed, that the regular services of the church are to us the more necessary, as we have laid aside many of those modes and expressions, which gave a tincture of religion to our social intercourse and domestic manners. The regard to particular days and seasons is nearly worn off. The forms of epistolary correspondence, and the friendly salutations which, in the last century, breathed a spirit of affectionate piety, are exchanged for the degrading ceremonial of unmeaning servility. The *God be with you—God bless you—If God permit—Heaven have you in its keeping*,—like the graceful *Salam*, or salutation of peace among the eastern nations, kept up in the mind a sense of the surrounding providence of the Divine Being, and might, in some measure, supersede the necessity of more formal addresses; whereas, in the present state of society, a stranger might pass day after day, and week after week, in the bosom of a christian country, without suspecting the faith of its inhabitants, (if Public Worship were laid aside,) from any circumstance, unless it were the obscure,

half-pronounced blessing, which is still sometimes murmured over the table.

Let it therefore be considered, when the length and abstracted nature of our public prayers is objected to, that we have nothing to take their place. If our attention was excited by processions, garlands, altars, and sacrifices, and every action of our lives intermixed with some religious rite, these expressions of our homage might be more readily dispensed with ; but in reality, tedious as Mr Wakefield may think long prayers, they suit better with the gravity of the national disposition and the philosophic turn of our ideas, than any substitute which could be suggested by the most classic taste. Our prayers are become long, because our ceremonies are short.

SECTION IV.

The Obligation of Public Worship universal.

If we may suppose these views of the subject to have established the general utility of Public Worship, a question still arises, is the obligation to it universal? Is attendance on its exercises to be expected from those, whose own minds are temples more hallowed than any they can enter ; and whose knowledge and cultivation render it probable, that in every popular service they will meet with much to object to, and

little to interest a taste rendered fastidious by critical accuracy and elegant refinement? Without presuming to condemn the conduct of those, who are in every respect so competent to form their own plans according to their own judgment, I would mention some considerations which, even to them, may present it in a light not unworthy their attention.

It is, in the first place, an act of homage, and as such equally incumbent on all. It is a profession of faith, less dubious even than the performance of moral duties, which may proceed from a well directed prudence, or the harmony of a happy temperament. It is right and proper, that religion should have the honour of those who are calculated to do her honour. It is likewise useful for a pious man to be connected with pious people as such. Various associations are formed upon the ground of something, which men wish to improve or to enjoy in common. Literary men associate, musical men associate, political men associate together ; and as there is a great deal of the commerce of the world, in which it would be impossible to introduce religion, there ought by way of balance to be some society of which that is the ground and principle ; otherwise, from the very nature of our connexions with each other, we shall find religion less in our thoughts, than almost anything else in which we have an interest, and insensibly it will waste and die away for mere want of aliment. But the attendance of men of literature and knowledge is perhaps

most important from its effect upon others. The unenlightened worship with most pleasure, where those worship whose opinions they respect. A religion that is left for the vulgar will not long satisfy even them. There is harshness in saying to the bulk of mankind, Stand aside, we are wiser than you. There is harshness in saying, Our affections cannot move in concert; what edifies you, disgusts us; we cannot feel in common, even where we have a common interest.

In the intercourses of life, the man of urbanity makes a thousand sacrifices to the conciliating spirit of courtesy, and the science of attentions. The exercises of devotion, Mr Wakefield says, are wearisome. Suppose they were so, how many meetings do we frequent, to how many conversations do we listen with benevolent attention, where our own pleasure and our own improvement are not the objects to which our time is given up? He who knows much, must expect to be often present where he can learn nothing. While others are receiving information, he is practising a virtue. He, who in common life has learned to mix a regard to the feelings and opinions of others with the pursuit of his own gratifications, will bear, in the spirit of love and charity, the instruction which to him is unnecessary, the amplification which to him is tiresome, the deficiencies of method or of elocution, to which his ear and his judgment are acutely sensible; the imperfections, in short, of men or of societies inferior to himself in taste or knowledge;

as in conversation he bears with the communicative overflowings of self importance, the repetition of the well known tale, and the recurrence of the numerous, burdensome forms of civilised society.

It becomes us well to consider what would be the consequence, if the desertion of men of superior sense should become general in our assemblies. Not the abolition of public worship ; it is a practice too deeply rooted in the very propensities of our nature ; but this would be the consequence, that it would be thrown into the hands of professional men on the one hand, and of uninformed men on the other. By the one it would be corrupted, it would be debased by the other. Let the friends of moderation and good sense consider whether it is desirable, whether it is even safe, to withdraw from the public the powerful influence of their taste, knowledge, and liberality. Let them consider whether they are prepared to take the consequences of trusting in the hands of any clergy, so powerful an engine as that of public worship and instruction, without the salutary check of *their* presence who are best able to distinguish truth from falsehood, to detect unwarrantable pretensions, and to keep within tolerable bounds the wanderings of fanaticism.

Attentive to the signs of the times, they will have remarked, on the one hand, a disposition to give into deception, greater than might naturally have been presumed of this age, which we compliment with the

epithet of enlightened. Empiric extravagancies have been adopted, which violate every sober and consistent idea of the laws of nature, and new sects have sprung up distinguished by the wildest reveries of visionary credulity. On the other, they will have observed indications of a desire to discourage the freedom of investigation, to thicken the veil of mystery, and to revive every obsolete pretension of priestly power, which, in the most ignorant periods, the haughtiest churchman has ever dared to assume. They will have read with astonishment an official exhortation to the inferior clergy, it was not fulminated from the Vatican, it was not dragged to light from the mould and rust of remote ages. It was delivered by an English divine of the eighteenth century, brilliant in parts and high in place. He knew it was to meet the notice and encounter the criticism of an enlightened and philosophic people, and he has not scrupled to tell them, that *good works of a heretic are sin*; and that such a one may go to *hell with his load of moral merit on his back*. He has not scrupled to rank the first philosopher of this kingdom, and the man in it perhaps of all others most actively solicitous for the spread of what he at least believes to be genuine Christianity, with infidels and atheists; and thus by obvious inference has piously consigned him to the same doom. He has revived claims and opinions, which have upon their heads whole centuries of oblivion and contempt; and by slandering morality,

has thought to exalt religion. Reflecting on these things, they will consider whether the man of judgment does not desert the post assigned him by Providence, when he withdraws from popular assemblies both the countenance of his example, and the imposing awe of his presence; they will conceive themselves as invested with the high commission to take care *nequid respublica detrimenti capiat*; they will consider themselves as the salt of the earth, the leaven of the lump, not to be secluded in separate parcels, but to be mingled in the whole mass, diffusing through it their own spirit and favour.

The author of the Enquiry chooses to expatiate, it is not difficult to do it, on the discordant variety of the different modes of worship practised amongst men, and concludes it with characterising this alarming schism by the comparison of the poet;

One likes the pheasant's wing, and one the leg;
The vulgar boil, the learned roast an egg.

But might we not venture to ask,—Where, pray, is the harm of all this? Unless indeed I will not allow my neighbour to boil his egg because I roast mine. Eggs are good and nutritious food either way; and in the manner of dressing them, fancy and taste, nay caprice, if you will, may fairly be consulted. If I prefer the leg of a pheasant, and my neighbour finds it dry, let each take what he likes. It would be a conclusion singularly absurd, that eggs and pheasants were not to be eaten. All the harm is in having but

one table for guests of every description ; and yet even there, were I at a public ordinary, good in other respects, I would rather conform my taste in some measure to that of my neighbour, than be reduced to the melancholy necessity of eating my morsel by myself alone.

The Dissenters cannot be supposed to pass over in silence Mr Wakefield's strictures upon the manner, in which *they* have chosen to conduct their public and social worship. They are surprised and sorry to find themselves treated with such a mixture of bitterness and levity, by a man whose abilities they respect, and whom they have shewn themselves ready to embrace as a brother. They have their prejudices, they acknowledge, and he perhaps has his. Many forms and observances may to them be dear and venerable, through the force of early habit and association, which to a stranger in their Israel may appear uncouth, unnecessary, or even marked with a shade of ridicule. They pity Mr Wakefield's peculiar and insulated situation. Separating through the purest motive from one church, he has not found another with which he is inclined to associate ; divided by difference of opinions from one class of Christians, and by dissonance of taste from another, he finds the transition too violent from the college to the conventicle ; he worships alone because he stands alone ; and is, naturally perhaps, led to undervalue that fellowship, which has been lost to him between his early predilections and his *later opinions*.

If, however, the Dissenters are not so happy as to gain his affection, they must be allowed to urge their claims upon his esteem. They wish him to reflect, that neither his classical knowledge, nor his critical acumen, nor his acknowledged talents, set him so high in the esteem of good men, as that integrity which he possesses in common with those whom he despises; they believe further consideration would suggest to him, that it were more candid to pass over those peculiarities, which have originated in a delicate conscience and the fervour of devotion; and they cannot help asking, whether they had reason to expect the severity of sarcastic ridicule from him, whose best praise it is, that he has imitated their virtues and shared their sacrifices?

The Dissenters, however, do not make it their boast that they have nothing to reform. They have, perhaps, always been more conspicuous for principle than for taste; their practices are founded upon a prevalence of religious fervour, an animation and warmth of piety, which, if it no longer exists, it is vain to simulate. But what they do make their boast is, that they acknowledge no principle which forbids them to reform; that they have no leave to ask of bishops, synods, or parliaments, in order to lay aside forms which have become vapid. They are open to conviction; they are ready to receive with thankfulness every *sober* and *liberal* remark, which may assist them

to improve their religious addresses, and model them to the temper of the public mind.

But, with regard to those practices of suberabundant devotion, which have drawn down upon them the indignation of the critic, it is the opinion of those who best know the Dissenters of the present day, that they might have been suffered to fall quietly of themselves; they are supported by no authority, defrayed by no impost. If they make long prayers, it is at the expense only of their own breath and spirits; no widows' houses are devoured by it. If the present generation *yawn* and *slumber* over the exercises, which their fathers attended with pious alacrity, the sons will of course learn to shorten them. If the disposition of their public services wants animation, as perhaps it does, the silent pews will be deserted one by one, and they will be obliged to seek some other mode of engaging the attention of their audience. But modes and forms affect not the essence of public worship; that may be performed with a form or without one; by words alone, or by symbolical expressions, combined with or separated from instruction; with or without the assistance of a particular order appointed to officiate in leading the devotions; it may be celebrated one day in seven, or in eight, or in ten; in many of these particulars a certain deference should be had to the sentiments of that society with which, upon the whole, we think it best to connect ourselves, and as times and manners change, these circumstances

will vary ; but the root of the practice is too strongly interwoven with the texture of the human frame ever to be abandoned. While man has wants, he will pray ; while he is sensible of blessings, he will offer praise ; while he has common wants and common blessings, he will pray and praise in company with his fellows ; and while he feels himself a social being, he will not be persuaded to lay aside social worship.

SECTION V.

In what Respect many of the Forms and Habits of Public Worship are susceptible of Improvement.

It must, however, be acknowledged, that, in order to give Public Worship all the grace and efficacy of which it is susceptible, much alteration is necessary. It is necessary here, as in every other concern, that timely reformation should prevent neglect. Much might be done by judgment, taste, and a devotional spirit united, to improve the plan of our religious assemblies. Should a genius arise amongst us qualified for such a task, and in circumstances favourable to his being listened to, he would probably remark first, on the construction of our churches, so ill adapted are a great part of them to the purposes either of hearing or seeing. He would reprobate those little gloomy solitary cells, planned by the spirit of aristocracy, which deform the building no less to the eye of taste

than to the eye of benevolence, and insulating each family within its separate inclosure, favour at once the pride of rank and the laziness of indulgence. He might choose for these structures something of the amphitheatrical form, where the minister, on a raised platform, should be beheld with ease by the whole wave of people, at once bending together in deep humiliation, or spreading forth their hands in the earnestness of petition.

It would certainly be found desirable, that the people should themselves have a large share in the performance of the service, as the intermixture of their voices would both introduce more variety and greater animation; provided pains were taken by proper teaching to enable them to bear their part with a decorum and propriety, which, it must be confessed, we do not see at present amongst those whose public services possess the advantage of responses. The explaining, and teaching them to recite such hymns and collects, as it might be thought proper they should bear a part in, would form a pleasing and useful branch of the instruction of young people, and of the lower classes; it would give them an interest in the public service, and might fill up agreeably a vacant hour either on the Sunday, or on some other leisure day, especially if they were likewise regularly instructed in singing for the same purpose.

As we have never seen, perhaps we can hardly conceive, the effect which the united voices of a whole

congregation, all in the lively expression of one feeling, would have upon the mind. We should then perceive not only that we were doing the same thing in the same place, but that we were doing it with one accord. The deep silence of listening expectation, the burst of united praises, the solemn pauses that invite reflection, the varied tones of humiliation, gratitude, or persuasion, would swell and melt the heart by turns; nor would there be any reason to guard against the wandering eye, when every object it rested on must forcibly recall it to the duties of the place. Possibly it might be found expedient to separate worship from instruction; the learned teacher from the leader of the public devotions, in whom voice, and popular talents, might perhaps be allowed to supersede a more deep and critical acquaintance with the doctrines of theology. One consequence, at least, would follow such a separation, that instruction would be given more systematically.

Nothing that is taught at all is taught in so vague and desultory a manner as the doctrines of religion. A congregation may attend for years, even a good preacher, and never hear the evidences of either natural or revealed religion regularly explained to them: they may attend for years, and never hear a connected system of moral duties extending to the different situations and relations of life; they may attend for years, and not even gain any clear idea of the history and chronology of the Old and New Testament, which

are read to them every Sunday. They will hear abundance of excellent doctrine, and will often feel their hearts warmed and their minds edified ; but their ideas upon these subjects will be confused and imperfect, because they are treated on in a manner so totally different from everything else, which bears the name of instruction. This is probably owing, in a great measure, to the custom of prefixing to every pulpit discourse a sentence, taken indiscriminately from any part of the Scriptures, under the name of a text, which at first implying an exposition, was afterwards used to suggest a subject, and is now, by degrees, dwindling into a motto. Still, however, the custom subsists ; and while it serves to supersede a more methodical course of instruction, tends to keep up in the minds of the generality of hearers a very superstitious idea, not now entertained, it is to be presumed, by the generality of those who teach, of the equal sacredness and importance of every part of so miscellaneous a collection.

If these insulated discourses, of which each is complete in itself, and therefore can have but little compass, were digested into a regular plan of lectures, supported by a course of reading, to which the audience might be directed, it would have the further advantage of rousing the inattentive and restraining the rambling hearer by the interest which would be created by such a connected series of information. They would occupy a larger space in the mind, they would

more frequently be the subject of recollection and meditation ; there would be a fear of missing one link in such a chain of truths, and the more intelligent part of a congregation might find a useful and interesting employment, in assisting the teacher in the instruction of those, who were not able to comprehend instruction with the same facility as themselves.

When such a course of instruction had been delivered, it would not be expected that discourses, into which men of genius and learning had digested their best thoughts, should be thrown by, or brought forward again, as it were, by stealth ; but they would be regularly and avowedly repeated at proper intervals. It is usual upon the continent for a set of sermons to be delivered in several churches, each of which has its officiating minister for the stated public worship ; and thus a whole district partakes the advantage of the labours of a man eminent for composition. Perhaps it might be desirable to join to religious information some instruction in the laws of our country, which are, or ought to be, founded upon morals ; and which, by a strange solecism, are obligatory upon all, and scarcely promulgated, much less explained. Many ideas will offer themselves to a thinking man, who wishes not to abolish, but to improve the public worship of his country. These are only hints, offered with diffidence and respect, to those who are able to judge of and carry them into effect.

Above all, it would be desirable to separate from religion that idea of gloom, which in this country has

but too generally accompanied it. The fact cannot be denied ; the cause must be sought, partly in our national character, which I am afraid is not naturally either very cheerful or very social, and which we shall do well to meliorate by every possible attention to our habits of life ; and partly to the colour of our religious systems. No one who embraces the common idea of future torments, together with the doctrine of election and reprobation, the insufficiency of virtue to escape the *wrath* of God, and the strange absurdity which, it should seem, through similarity of sound alone has been admitted as an axiom, that sins committed against an Infinite Being do therefore deserve infinite punishment, no one, I will venture to assert, can believe such tenets, and have them often in his thoughts, and yet be cheerful.

Whence a system has arisen so incompatible with that justice and benevolence, which in the discourses of our Saviour are represented as the most essential attributes of the Divine Being, is not easy to trace. It is probable, however, that *power*, being the most prominent feature in our conceptions of the Creator, and that of which we see the most striking image here on earth, (there being a greater portion of uncontrolled power, than of unmixed wisdom or goodness to be found amongst human beings,) the Deity would naturally be likened to an absolute monarch ;—and most absolute monarchs having been tyrants, jealous of their sovereignty, averse to freedom of investiga-

tion, ordering affairs, not with a view to the happiness of their subjects, but to the advancement of their own glory ; not to be approached but with rich gifts and offerings ; bestowing favours, not in proportion to merit, but from the pure influence of caprice and blind partiality ; to those who have offended them severe, and unforgiving, except induced to pardon by the importunate intercession of some favourite ; confining their enemies, when they had overcome them, after a contest, in deep, dark dungeons under ground, or putting them to death in the prolonged misery of excruciating tortures,—these features of human depravity have been most faithfully transferred to the Supreme Being ; and men have imaged to themselves how a Nero or a Domitian would have acted, if, from the extent of their dominion there had been no escape, and to the duration of it no period.

These ideas of the vulgar belief, terrible, but as yet vague and undefined, passed into the speculations of the schoolmen, by whom they were combined with the metaphysical idea of eternity, arranged in specific propositions, fixed in creeds, and elaborated into systems, till at length they have been sublimed into all the tremendous horrors of the calvinistic faith. These doctrines, it is true, among thinking people, are losing ground ; but there is still apparent, in that class called serious Christians, a tenderness in exposing them ; a sort of leaning towards them, as in walking over a precipice one should lean to the safest side ; an idea

that they are, if not true, at least good to be believed, and that a salutary error is better than a dangerous truth. But that error can neither be salutary nor harmless, which attributes to the Deity injustice and cruelty ; and that religion must have the worst of tendencies, which renders it dangerous for man to imitate the being whom he worships.

Let those who hold such tenets consider, that the invisible Creator has no name, and is identified only by his character ; and they will tremble to think *what* being they are worshipping, when they invoke a power capable of producing existence, in order to continue it in never ending torments. The God of the Assembly's Catechism is not the *same* God with the Deity of Thomson's Seasons, and of Hutcheson's Ethics. Unity of character, in what we adore, is much more essential than unity of person. We often boast, and with reason, of the purity of our religion, as opposed to the grossness of the theology of the Greeks and Romans ; but we should remember, that cruelty is as much worse than licentiousness, as a Moloch is worse than a satyr.

When will Christians permit themselves to believe, that the same conduct which gains them the approbation of good men here, will secure the favour of heaven hereafter ? When will they cease making their court to their Maker by the same servile debasement, and affectation of lowliness, by which the vain potentates of the earth are flattered ? When a harmless and

well meaning man, in the exaggerated figures of theological rhetoric, calls himself the vilest of sinners, it is in precisely the same spirit of false humility, in which the courtier uses degrading and disqualifying expressions, when he speaks of himself in his adulatory addresses to his sovereign. When a good man draws near the close of a life, not free indeed from faults, but pure from crime, a life spent in the habitual exercise of all those virtues which adorn and dignify human nature, and in the uniform approach to that perfection, which is confessedly unattainable in this imperfect state,—when a man, perhaps like Dr Price, whose name will be ever pronounced with affectionate veneration and deep regard by all the friends of philosophy, virtue, and mankind, is about to resign his soul into the hands of his Maker, he ought to do it, not only with a reliance on his mercy, but his justice; a generous confidence and pious resignation should be blended in his deportment. It does not become him to pay the blasphemous homage of deprecating the wrath of God, when he ought to throw himself into the arms of his love. He is not to think that virtue is one thing here, and another in heaven; or that he on whom blessings and eulogiums are ready to burst from all honest tongues, can be an object of punishment with him, who is infinitely more benevolent than any of his creatures.

These remarks may be thought foreign to the subject in question; but in fact they are not so. Public

Worship will be tinctured with gloom, while our ideas of its object are darkened by superstition ; it will be infected with hypocrisy, while its professions and tenets run counter to the genuine, unperverted moral sense of mankind ; it will not meet the countenance of philosophers, so long as we are obliged to unlearn our ethics, in order to learn divinity. Let it be considered that these opinions greatly favour immorality. The doctrine that all are vile, and equally merit a state of punishment, is an idea as consolatory to the profligate, as it is humiliating to the saint ; and that is one reason why it has always been a favourite doctrine. The indecent confidence of a Dodd*, and the debasing terrors of a Johnson, or of more blameless men than he, spring from one and the same source. It prevents the genuine workings of real penitence, by enjoining confessions of imaginary demerit ; it quenches religious gratitude, because conceiving only of two states of retribution, both in the extreme, and feeling that our crimes, whatever they may be, cannot have deserved the one, we are not sufficiently thankful for the prospect of the other, which we look upon as only a necessary alternative. Lastly, it dissolves the connexion between religion and common life, by

* ‘ And admitted, as I trust I shall be, to the realms of bliss before you, I shall hail your arrival there with transport, and rejoice to acknowledge that you was my comforter, my advocate, and my friend.’—Letter from Dr Dodd to Dr Johnson. See Boswell’s *Life of Johnson*, Vol. II. p. 140.

introducing a set of phrases and a standard of moral feeling, totally different from those ideas of praise and blame, merit and demerit, upon which we do and must act in our commerce with our fellow creatures.

There are periods in which the human mind seems to slumber, but this is not one of them. A keen spirit of research is now abroad, and demands reform. Perhaps in none of the nations of Europe will their articles of faith, or their church establishments, or their modes of worship, be able to maintain their ground for many years in exactly the same position in which they stand at present. Religion and manners reciprocally act upon one another. As religion, well understood, is a most powerful agent in meliorating and softening our manners; so, on the other hand, manners, as they advance in cultivation, tend to correct and refine our religion. Thus, to a nation in any degree acquainted with the social feelings, human sacrifices, and sanguinary rites, could never long appear obligatory.

The mild spirit of Christianity has, no doubt, had its influence in softening the ferocity of the Gothic times; and the increasing humanity of the present period will, in its turn, produce juster ideas of Christianity, and diffuse through the solemnities of our worship, the celebration of our sabbaths, and every observance connected with religion, that air of amenity and sweetness, which is the offspring of literature, and the peaceful intercourses of society. The age

which has demolished dungeons, rejected torture, and given so fair a prospect of abolishing the iniquity of the slave trade, cannot long retain among its articles of belief the gloomy perplexities of Calvinism, and the heart withering perspective of cruel and never ending punishments.

THOUGHTS
ON THE
DEVOTIONAL TASTE,
ON
SECTS,
AND ON
ESTABLISHMENTS.

FROM MRS BARBAULD'S MISCELLANEOUS PROSE PIECES.

It is observed by a late most amiable and elegant writer, that religion may be considered in three different views. As a system of opinions, its sole object is truth; and the only faculty that has anything to do with it is reason, exerted in the freest and most dispassionate inquiry. As a principle regulating our conduct, religion is a habit, and like all other habits, of slow growth, and gaining strength only by repeated exertions. But it may likewise be considered as a taste, an affair of sentiment and feeling, and in this sense it is properly called Devotion. Its seat is in the imagination and the passions, and it has its source in that relish for the sublime, the vast, and the beautiful,

by which we taste the charms of poetry and other compositions that address our finer feelings ; rendered more lively and interesting by a sense of gratitude for personal benefits. It is in a great degree constitutional, and is by no means found in exact proportion to the virtue of a character.

It is with relation to this last view of the subject, that the observations in this essay are hazarded ; for though, as a rule of life, the authority and salutary effects of religion are pretty universally acknowledged, and though its tenets have been defended with sufficient zeal, its affections languish, the spirit of Devotion is certainly at a very low ebb amongst us, and what is surprising, it has fallen, I know not how, into a certain contempt, and is treated with great indifference, amongst many of those who value themselves on the purity of their faith, and who are distinguished by the sweetness of their morals. As the religious affections in a great measure rise and fall with the pulse, and are affected by everything which acts upon the imagination, they are apt to run into strange excesses ; and if directed by a melancholy or enthusiastic faith, their workings are often too strong for a weak head, or a delicate frame ; and for this reason they have been almost excluded from religious worship by many persons of real piety. It is the character of the present age to allow little to sentiment, and all the warm and generous emotions are treated as romantic by the supercilious brow of a cold hearted philosophy. The

man of science, with an air of superiority, leaves them to some florid declaimer, who professes to work upon the passions of the lower class, where they are so debased by noise and nonsense, that it is no wonder if they move disgust in those of elegant and better informed minds.

Yet there is a devotion, generous, liberal, and humane, the child of more exalted feelings than base minds can enter into, which assimilates man to higher natures, and lifts him "above this visible diurnal sphere." Its pleasures are ultimate, and, when early cultivated, continue vivid even in that uncomfortable season of life when some of the passions are extinct, when imagination is dead, and the heart begins to contract within itself. Those, who want this taste, want a sense, a part of their nature, and should not presume to judge of feelings to which they must ever be strangers. No one pretends to be a judge in poetry or the fine arts, who has not both a natural and a cultivated relish for them; and shall the narrow minded children of earth, absorbed in low pursuits, dare to treat as visionary, objects which they have never made themselves acquainted with? Silence on such subjects will better become them. But to vindicate the pleasures of devotion to those, who have neither taste nor knowledge about them, is not the present object. It rather deserves our inquiry, what causes have contributed to check the operations of religious impressions amongst those, who have steady principles, and *are well disposed to virtue.*

And, in the first place, there is nothing more prejudicial to the feelings of a devout heart, than a habit of disputing on religious subjects. Free inquiry is undoubtedly necessary to establish a rational belief; but a disputatious spirit, and fondness for controversy, give the mind a sceptical turn, with an aptness to call in question the most established truths. It is impossible to preserve that deep reverence for the Deity with which we ought to regard him, when all his attributes, and even his very existence, become the subject of familiar debate. Candour demands that a man should allow his opponent an unlimited freedom of speech, and it is not easy in the heat of discourse to avoid falling into an indecent or careless expression; hence those who think seldomer of religious subjects, often treat them with more respect, than those whose profession keeps them constantly in their view. A plain man of a serious turn would probably be shocked to hear questions of this nature treated with that ease and negligence, with which they are generally discussed by the practised Theologian, or the young lively Academic ready primed from the schools of logic and metaphysics. As the ear loses its delicacy by being obliged only to *hear* coarse and vulgar language, so the veneration for religion wears off by hearing it treated with disregard, though we ourselves are employed in defending it; and to this it is owing, that many who have confirmed themselves in the belief of religion, have never been able to recover that strong

and affectionate sense of it, which they had before they began to inquire, and have wondered to find their devotion grown weaker when their faith was better grounded. Indeed, strong reasoning powers and quick feelings do not often unite in the same person. Men of a scientific turn seldom lay their hearts open to impression. Previously biassed by the love of system, they do indeed attend the offices of religion, but they dare not trust themselves with the preacher, and are continually upon the watch to observe whether every sentiment agrees with their own particular tenets.

The spirit of inquiry is easily distinguished from the spirit of disputation. A state of doubt is not a pleasant state. It is painful, anxious, and distressing beyond most others; it disposes the mind to dejection and modesty. Whoever therefore is so unfortunate as not to have settled his opinions in important points, will proceed in the search of truth with deep humility, unaffected earnestness, and a serious attention to every argument that may be offered, which he will be much rather inclined to revolve in his own mind, than to use as materials for dispute. Even with these dispositions, it is happy for a man when he does not find much to alter in the religious system he has embraced; for if that undergoes a total revolution, his religious feelings are too generally so weakened by the shock, that they hardly recover again their original tone and vigour.

Shall we mention Philosophy as an enemy to religion? God forbid! Philosophy,

Daughter of Heaven, that slow ascending still
Investigating sure the form of things,
With radiant finger points to Heaven again.

Yet there is a view in which she exerts an influence perhaps rather unfavourable to the fervour of simple piety. Philosophy does indeed enlarge our conceptions of the Deity, and give us the sublimest ideas of his power and extent of dominion; but it raises him too high for our imaginations to take hold of, and in a great measure destroys that affectionate regard, which is felt by the common class of pious Christians. When, after contemplating the numerous productions of this earth, the various forms of being, the laws, the mode of their existence, we rise yet higher, and turn our eyes to that magnificent profusion of suns and systems, which astronomy pours upon the mind; when we grow acquainted with the majestic order of nature, and those eternal laws which bind the material and intellectual worlds; when we trace the footsteps of creative energy through regions of unmeasured space, and still find new wonders disclosed and pressing upon the view; we grow giddy with the prospect; the mind is astonished, confounded at its own insignificance; we think it almost impiety for a worm to lift its head from the dust, and address the Lord of so stupendous a universe; the idea of communion with our Maker shocks us as presumption, and the only feeling the soul is ca-

pable of in such a moment is a deep and painful sense of its own abasement. It is true, the same philosophy teaches that the Deity is intimately present through every part of this complicated system, and neglects not any of his works ; but this is a truth which is believed without being felt ; our imagination cannot here keep pace with our reason, and the sovereign of nature seems ever further removed from us, in proportion as we enlarge the bounds of his creation.

Philosophy represents the Deity in too abstracted a manner to engage our affections. A Being without hatred and without fondness, going on in one steady course of even benevolence, neither delighted with praises, nor moved by importunity, does not interest us so much as a character open to the feelings of indignation, the soft relentings of mercy, and the partialities of particular affections. We require some common nature, or at least the appearance of it, on which to build our intercourse. It is also a fault of which philosophers are often guilty, that they dwell too much in generals. Accustomed to reduce every thing to the operation of general laws, they turn our attention to larger views, attempt to grasp the whole order of the universe, and in the zeal of a systematic spirit seldom leave room for those particular and personal mercies, which are the food of gratitude. They trace the great outline of nature, but neglect the colouring which gives warmth and beauty to the piece. As in poetry it is not vague and general description,

but a few striking circumstances clearly related and strongly worked up—as in a landscape it is not such a vast extensive range of country as pains the eye to stretch to its limits, but a beautiful, well defined prospect, which gives the most pleasure—so neither are those unbounded views in which philosophy delights, so much calculated to touch the heart as home views and nearer objects. The philosopher offers up general praises on the altar of universal nature ; the devout man, on the altar of his heart, presents his own sighs, his own thanksgivings, his own earnest desires ; the former worship is more sublime, the latter more personal and affecting.

We are likewise too scrupulous in our public exercises, and too studious of accuracy. A prayer strictly philosophical must ever be a cold and dry composition. From an over anxious fear of admitting any expression that is not strictly proper, we are apt to reject all warm and pathetic imagery, and, in short, everything that strikes upon the heart and the senses. But it may be said, “ If the Deity be indeed so sublime a being, and if his designs and manner are so infinitely beyond our comprehension, how can a thinking mind join in the addresses of the vulgar, or avoid being overwhelmed with the indistinct vastness of such an idea. Far be it from me to deny, that awe and veneration must ever make a principal part of our regards to the Master of the universe, or to defend that style of indecent familiarity, which is yet more shocking than

indifference ; but let it be considered that we cannot hope to avoid all improprieties in speaking of such a Being ; that the most philosophical address we can frame is probably no more free from them, than the devotions of the vulgar ; that the Scriptures set us an example of accommodating the language of prayer to common conceptions, and making use of figures and modes of expression far from being strictly defensible ; and that, upon the whole, it is safer to trust to our genuine feelings, feelings implanted in us by the God of nature, than to any metaphysical subtleties. He has impressed me with the idea of trust and confidence, and my heart flies to him in danger ; of mercy to forgive, and I melt before him in penitence ; of bounty to bestow, and I ask of him all I want or wish for. I may make use of an inaccurate expression, I may paint him to my imagination too much in the fashion of humanity ; but while my heart is pure, while I depart not from the line of moral duty, the error is not dangerous. Too critical a spirit is the bane of everything great or pathetic. In our creeds let us be guarded ; let us there weigh every syllable ; but in compositions addressed to the heart, let us give freer scope to the language of the affections, and the overflowing of a warm and generous disposition.

Another cause which most effectually operates to check devotion, is ridicule. I speak not here of open derision of things sacred ; but there is a certain ludicrous style in talking of such subjects, which, without

any ill design, does much harm ; and perhaps those, whose studies or profession lead them to be chiefly conversant with the offices of religion, are most apt to fall into this impropriety ; for their ideas being chiefly taken from that source, their common conversation is apt to be tinctured with fanciful allusions to scripture expressions, to prayers, &c. which have all the effect of a parody, and, like parodies, destroy the force of the finest passage, by associating it with something trivial and ridiculous. Of this nature is Swift's well known jest of " Dearly beloved Roger," which whoever has strong upon his memory, will find it impossible to attend with proper seriousness to that part of the service. We should take great care to keep clear from all these trivial associations, in whatever we wish to be regarded as venerable.

Another species of ridicule to be avoided, is that kind of sneer often thrown upon those whose hearts are giving way to honest emotion. There is an extreme delicacy in all the finer affections, which makes them shy of observation, and easily checked. Love, Wonder, Pity, the enthusiasm of Poetry, shrink from the notice of even an indifferent eye, and never indulge themselves freely but in solitude, or when heightened by the powerful force of sympathy. Observe an ingenuous youth at a well wrought tragedy. If all around him are moved, he suffers his tears to flow freely ; but if a single eye meets him with a glance of contemptuous indifference, he can no longer enjoy

his sorrow ; he blushes at having wept, and in a moment his heart is shut up to every impression of tenderness. It is sometimes mentioned as a reproach to Protestants, that they are susceptible of a false shame when observed in the exercises of their religion, from which Papists are free. But I take this to proceed from the purer nature of our religion ; for the less it is made to consist in outward pomp and mechanical worship, and the more it has to do with the finer affections of the heart, the greater will be the reserve and delicacy which attend the expression of its sentiments. Indeed, ridicule ought to be very sparingly used ; for it is an enemy to everything sublime or tender ; the least degree of it, whether well or ill founded, suddenly and instantaneously stops the workings of passion ; and those who indulge a talent that way, would do well to consider, that they are rendering themselves forever incapable of all the higher pleasures either of taste or morals. More especially do these cold pleasantries hurt the minds of youth, by checking that generous expansion of heart to which their open tempers are naturally prone, and producing a vicious shame, through which they are deprived of the enjoyment of heroic sentiments or generous action.

In the next place, let us not be superstitiously afraid of superstition. It shews great ignorance of the human heart, and the springs by which its passions are moved, to neglect taking advantage of the impression, which particular circumstances, times and seasons,

naturally make upon the mind. The root of all superstition is the principle of the association of ideas, by which, objects naturally indifferent become dear and venerable, through their connexion with interesting ones. It is true, this principle has been much abused ; it has given rise to pilgrimages innumerable, worship of relics, and priestly power. But let us not carry our ideas of purity and simplicity so far as to neglect it entirely. Superior natures, it is possible, may be equally affected with the same truths at all times, and in all places ; but we are not so made. Half the pleasures of elegant minds are derived from this source. Even the enjoyments of sense, without it, would lose much of their attraction. Who does not enter into the sentiment of the poet, in that passage so full of nature and truth.

He that outlives this hour, and comes safe home,
Shall stand on tiptoe when this day is named,
And rouse him at the name of Crispian ;
He that outlives this day and sees old age,
Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours,
And say, tomorrow is St Crispian's.

But were not the benefits of the victory equally apparent on any other day of the year? Why commemorate the anniversary with such distinguished regard? Those who can ask such a question, have never attended to some of the strongest instincts in our nature. Yet it has lately been the fashion, amongst those who call themselves rational Christians, to treat as puerile, *all* attentions of this nature when relative to religion. *They would*

Kiss with pious lips the sacred earth,
Which gave a Hampden or a Russell birth.

They will visit the banks of Avon with all the devotion of enthusiastic zeal ; celebrate the birth day of the hero and the patriot ; and yet pour contempt upon the Christian, who suffers himself to be warmed by similar circumstances relating to his Master, or the connexion of sentiments of peculiar reverence with times, places, and men, which have been appropriated to the service of religion. A wise preacher will not, from a fastidious refinement, disdain to affect his hearers from the season of the year, the anniversary of a national blessing, a remarkable escape from danger, or, in short, any incident that is sufficiently guarded, and far enough removed from what is trivial, to be out of danger of becoming ludicrous.

It will not be amiss to mention here, a reproach which has been cast upon devotional writers, that they are apt to run into the language of love. Perhaps the charge would be full as just, had they said that Love borrows the language of Devotion ; for the votaries of that passion are fond of using those exaggerated expressions, which can suit nothing below Divinity ; and you can hardly address the greatest of all Beings in a strain of more profound adoration, than the lover uses to the object of his attachment. But the truth is, Devotion does in no small degree resemble that fanciful and elevated kind of love, which depends not on the senses. Nor is the likeness to be

wondered at, since both have their source in the love of beauty and excellence. Both are exceeding prone to superstition, and apt to run into romantic excesses. Both are nourished by poetry and music, and felt with the greatest fervour in the warmer climates. Both carry the mind out of itself, and powerfully refine the affections from everything gross, low, and selfish.

But it is time to retire ; we are treading upon enchanted ground, and shall be suspected by many of travelling towards the regions of chivalry and old romance. And were it so, many a fair majestic idea might be gathered from those forgotten walks, which would well answer the trouble of transplanting. It must however be owned, that very improper language has formerly been used on these subjects ; but there cannot be any great danger of such excesses, where the mind is guarded by a rational faith, and the social affections have full scope in the free commerce and legitimate connexions of society.

Having thus considered the various causes, which contribute to deaden the feelings of devotion, it may not be foreign to the subject to inquire in what manner they are affected by the different modes of religion. I speak not of opinions ; for these have much less influence upon the heart, than the circumstances which attend particular persuasions. A sect *may* only differ from an establishment, as one absurd opinion differs from another ; but there is a character and cast of

manners belonging to each, which will be perfectly distinct ; and of a sect, the character will vary as it is a rising or a declining sect, persecuted or at ease. Yet while divines have wearied the world with canvassing contrary doctrines and jarring articles of faith, the philosopher has not considered, as the subject deserved, what situation was most favourable to virtue, sentiment, and pure manners. To a philosophic eye, free from prejudice, and accustomed to large views of the great polity carried on in the moral world, perhaps varying and opposite forms may appear proper, and well calculated for their respective ends ; and he will neither wish entirely to destroy the old, nor wholly to crush the new.

The great line of division between different modes of religion, is formed by Establishments and Sects. In an infant sect, which is always in some degree a persecuted one, the strong union and entire affection of its followers, the sacrifices they make to principle, the force of novelty, and the amazing power of sympathy, all contribute to cherish devotion. It rises even to passion, and absorbs every other sentiment. Severity of manners imposes respect ; and the earnestness of the new proselytes renders them insensible to injury, or even to ridicule. A strain of eloquence, often coarse indeed, but strong and persuasive, works like leaven in the heart of the people. In this state, all outward helps are superfluous, the living spirit of devotion is amongst them, the world sinks away to

nothing before it, and every object but one is annihilated. The social principle mixes with the flame, and renders it more intense; strong parties are formed, and friends or lovers are not more closely connected, than the members of these little communities.

It is this kind of devotion, a devotion which those of more settled and peaceable times can only guess at, which made amends to the first Christians for all they resigned, and all they suffered; this draws the martyr to a willing death, and enables the confessor to endure a voluntary poverty. But this stage cannot last long; the heat of persecution abates, and the fervour of zeal feels a proportional decay. Now comes on the period of reasoning and examination. The principles, which have produced such mighty effects on the minds of men, acquire an importance, and become objects of the public attention. Opinions are canvassed. Those who before bore testimony to their religion only by patient suffering, now defend it with argument; and all the keenness of polemical disquisition is awakened on either side. The fair and generous idea of religious liberty, which never originates in the breast of a triumphant party, now begins to unfold itself. To vindicate these rights, and explain these principles, learning, which in the former state was despised, is assiduously cultivated by the sectaries; their minds become enlightened, and a large portion of knowledge, especially religious knowledge, is diffused through their whole body. Their manners

are less austere, without having as yet lost anything of their original purity. Their ministers gain respect as writers, and their pulpit discourses are studied and judicious. The most unfavourable circumstance of this æra is, that those who dissent, are very apt to acquire a critical and disputatious spirit; for, being continually called upon to defend doctrines in which they differ from the generality, their attention is early turned to the argumentative part of religion; and hence we see that sermons, which afford food for this taste, are with them thought of more importance than prayer and praise, though these latter are undoubtedly the more genuine and indispensable parts of public worship.

This then is the second period; the third approaches fast; men grow tired of a controversy, which becomes insipid from being exhausted; persecution has not only ceased, it begins to be forgotten; and from the absence of opposition in either kind, springs a fatal and spiritless indifference. That sobriety, industry, and abstinence from fashionable pleasures, which distinguished the fathers, has made the sons wealthy; and, eager to enjoy their riches, they long to mix with that world, a separation from which was the best guard to their virtues. A secret shame creeps in upon them, when they acknowledge their relation to a disesteemed sect; they therefore endeavour to file off its peculiarities, but in so doing they destroy its very being. Connexions with the establishment, whether of inti-

macy, business, or relationship, which formerly, from their superior zeal, turned to the advantage of the sect, now operate against it. Yet these connexions are formed more frequently than ever ; and those who a little before, soured by the memory of recent suffering, betrayed perhaps an aversion from having any thing in common with the church, now affect to come as near it as possible ; and, like a little boat that takes a large vessel in tow, the sure consequence is, the being drawn into its vortex. They aim at elegance and show in their places of worship, the appearance of their preachers, &c. and thus impolitically awaken a taste it is impossible they should ever gratify. They have worn off many forbidding singularities, and are grown more amiable and pleasing. But those singularities were of use ; they set a mark upon them, they pointed them out to the world, and thus obliged persons so distinguished to exemplary strictness. No longer obnoxious to the world, they are open to all the seductions of it. Their minister, that respectable character which once inspired reverence and affectionate esteem, their teacher and their guide, is now dwindled into the mere leader of the public devotions ; or, lower yet, a person hired to entertain them every week with an elegant discourse. In proportion as his importance decreases, his salary sits heavy on the people ; and he feels himself depressed by that most cruel of all mortifications to a generous mind, the consciousness of being a burden upon those

from whom he derives his scanty support. Unhappily, amidst this change of manners, there are forms of strictness, and a set of phrases introduced in their first enthusiasm, which still subsist ; these they are ashamed to use, and know not how to decline ; and their behaviour, in consequence of them, is awkward and irresolute. Those, who have set out with the largest share of mysticism and flighty zeal, find themselves particularly embarrassed by this circumstance.

When things are come to this crisis, their tendency is evident ; and though the interest and name of a sect may be kept up for a time by the generosity of former ages, the abilities of particular men, or that reluctance which keeps a generous mind from breaking old connexions ; it must, in a short course of years, melt away into the establishment, the womb and the grave of all other modes of religion.

An *Establishment* affects the mind by splendid buildings, music, the mysterious pomp of ancient ceremonies ; by the sacredness of peculiar orders, habits, and titles ; by its secular importance ; and by connecting with religion, ideas of order, dignity, and antiquity. It speaks to the heart through the imagination and the senses ; and though it never can raise devotion so high, as we have described it in a beginning sect, it will preserve it from ever sinking into contempt. As, to a woman in the glow of health and beauty, the most careless dress is the most becoming ; but when the freshness of youth is worn off, greater attention is

necessary, and rich ornaments are required to throw an air of dignity round her person ; so while a sect retains its first plainness, simplicity and affectionate zeal, it wants nothing an establishment could give ; but that once declined, the latter becomes far more respectable. The faults of an establishment grow venerable from length of time ; the improvements of a sect appear whimsical from their novelty. Ancient families, fond of rank, and of that order which secures it to them, are on the side of the former. Traders incline to the latter ; and so do generally men of genius, as it favours their originality of thinking. An establishment leans to superstition, a sect to enthusiasm ; the one is a more dangerous and violent excess, the other more fatally debilitates the powers of the mind ; the one is a deeper colouring, the other a more lasting dye ; but the coldness and languor of a declining sect produces skepticism. Indeed, a sect is never stationary, as it depends entirely on passions and opinions ; though it often attains excellence, it never rests in it, but is always in danger of one extreme or the other ; whereas an old establishment, whatever else it may want, possesses the grandeur arising from stability.

We learn to respect whatever respects itself ; and are easily led to think that system requires no alteration, which never admits of any. It is this circumstance, more than any other, which gives a dignity to that accumulated mass of error, the Church of Rome. A fabric, which has weathered many successive ages,

though the architecture be rude, the parts disproportionate, and overloaded with ornament, strikes us with a sort of admiration, merely from its having held so long together.

The *minister* of a sect, and of an establishment, is upon a very different footing. The former is like the popular leader of an army ; he is obeyed with enthusiasm while he is obeyed at all ; but his influence depends on opinion, and is entirely personal ; the latter resembles a general appointed by the monarch ; he has soldiers less warmly devoted to him, but more steady, and better disciplined. The dissenting teacher is nothing, if he have not the spirit of a martyr ; and is the scorn of the world, if he be not above the world. The clergyman, possessed of power and affluence, and for that reason chosen from among the better ranks of people, is respected as a gentleman, though not venerated as an apostle ; and as his profession generally obliges him to decent manners, his order is considered as a more regular and civilised class of men, than their fellow subjects of the same rank. The dissenting teacher, separated from the people, but not raised above them, invested with no power, entitled to no emoluments, if he cannot acquire for himself authority, must feel the bitterness of dependance. The ministers of the former denomination cannot fall, but in some violent convulsion of the state ; those of the latter, when indifference and mutual neglect begin to succeed to that close union, which once subsisted be-

tween them and their followers, lose their former influence without resource ; the dignity and weight of their office are gone for ever ; they feel the insignificance of their pretensions, their spirits sink, and, except they take refuge in some collateral pursuit, and stand candidates for literary fame, they slide into an ambiguous and undecided character ; their time is too often sacrificed to frivolous compliances ; their manners lose their austerity, without having proportionally gained in elegance ; the world does not acknowledge them, for they are not of the world ; it cannot esteem them, for they are not superior to the world.

Upon the whole, then, it should seem, that the strictness of a sect, (and it can only be respectable by being strict,) is calculated for a few finer spirits, who make Religion their chief object. As to the much larger number, on whom she has only an imperfect influence, making them decent if not virtuous, and meliorating the heart without greatly changing it ; for all these the genius of an establishment is more eligible, and better fitted to cherish that moderate devotion of which alone they are capable. All those who have not strength of mind to think for themselves, who would live to virtue without denying the world, who wish much to be religious, but more to be genteel—naturally flow into the establishment. If it offered no motives to their minds, but such as are perfectly pure and spiritual, their devotion would not for that be more exalted, it would die away to nothing ; and it is

better their minds should receive only a tincture of religion, than be wholly without it. Those too, whose passions are regular and equable, and who do not aim at abstracted virtues, are commonly placed to most advantage within the pale of the national faith.

All the greater exertions of the mind, spirit to reform, fortitude and constancy to suffer, can be expected only from those who, forsaking the common road, are exercised in a peculiar course of moral discipline ; but it should be remembered, that these exertions cannot be expected from every character, nor on every occasion. Indeed, religion is a sentiment which takes such strong hold on all the most powerful principles of our nature, that it may easily be carried to excess. The Deity never meant our regards to him should engross the mind ; that indifference to sensible objects, which many moralists preach, is not perhaps desirable, except where the mind is raised above its natural tone, and extraordinary situations call forth extraordinary virtues.

If the peculiar advantages of a sect were well understood, its followers would not be impatient of those moderate restraints, which do not rise to persecution, nor affect any of their more material interests ; for, do they not bind them closer to each other, cherish zeal, and keep up the love of liberty ? What is the language of such restraints ? Do they not say, with a prevailing voice, Let the timorous and the worldly depart ; no one shall be of this persuasion, who is not sincere

disinterested, conscientious. It is notwithstanding proper, that men should be sensible of all their rights, assert them boldly, and protest against every infringement ; for it may be of advantage to bear what yet it is unjustifiable in others to inflict.

Neither would dissenters, if they attended to their real interests, be so ambitious as they generally are, of rich converts. Such converts only accelerate their decline ; they relax their discipline, and they acquire an influence very pernicious in societies, which ought to breathe nothing but the spirit of equality.

Sects are always strict in proportion to the corruption of establishments and the licentiousness of the times, and they are useful in the same proportion. Thus the austere lives of the primitive Christians counterbalanced the vices of that abandoned period ; and thus the Puritans, in the reign of Charles the Second, seasoned with a wholesome severity the profligacy of public manners. They were less amiable than their descendants of the present day ; but to be amiable was not the object ; they were of public utility ; and their scrupulous sanctity, (carried to excess, themselves only considered,) like a powerful antiseptic, opposed the contagion breathed from a most dissolute court. In like manner, that sect, one of whose most striking characteristics is a beautiful simplicity of dialect, served to check that strain of servile flattery and Gothic compliment so prevalent in the same period, and to keep up some idea of that manly plainness with *which* one human being ought to address another.

Thus have we seen that different modes of religion, though they bear little good will to each other, are nevertheless mutually useful. Perhaps there is not an establishment so corrupt, as not to make the gross of mankind better than they would be without it. Perhaps there is not a sect so eccentric, but that it has set some one truth in the strongest light, or carried some one virtue, before neglected, to its utmost height, or loosened some obstinate and long rooted prejudice. They answer their end ; they die away ; others spring up, and take their place. So the purer part of the element, continually drawn off from the mighty mass of waters, forms rivers, which, running in various directions, fertilize large countries ; yet, always tending towards the ocean, every accession to their bulk or grandeur but precipitates their course, and hastens their reunion with the common reservoir from which they were separated.

In the mean time, the devout heart always finds associates suitable to its disposition, and the particular cast of its virtues ; while the continual flux and reflux of opinions prevent the active principles from stagnating. There is an analogy between things material and immaterial. As, from some late experiments in philosophy it has been found, that the process of vegetation restores and purifies vitiated air ; so does that moral and political ferment, which accompanies the growth of new sects, communicate a kind of spirit and elasticity necessary to the vigour and health of the

soul, but soon lost amidst the corrupted breath of an indiscriminate multitude.

There remains only to add, lest the preceding view of Sects and Establishments should in any degree be misapprehended, that it has nothing to do with the *truth* of opinions, and relates only to the influence, which the adventitious circumstances attending them may have upon the manners and morals of their followers. It is therefore calculated to teach us candour, but not indifference. Large views of the moral polity of the world may serve to illustrate the providence of God, in his different dispensations, but are not made to regulate our own individual conduct, which must conscientiously follow our own opinions and belief. We may see much good in an Establishment, the doctrines of which we cannot give our assent to without violating our integrity ; we may respect the tendencies of a Sect, the tenets of which we utterly disapprove. We may think practices useful, which we cannot adopt without hypocrisy. We may think all religions beneficial, and believe of one alone that it is true.

END OF VOL. IV.



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